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ABSTRACT

The use and effectiveness of study centers and study center networks as a support system in distance education were investigated, based on interviews with students, tutors, and coordinators of four Australian distance education systems. The investigation of study centers at the University of Queensland, the Riverina College of Advanced Education, the Victorian TAFE Off Campus Network, and Deakin University gathered information about each institution's distance education philosophies and practices, as well as students views and needs. In addition, differences in study centers by state (Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria) were assessed. Profiles of selected study centers and a model of study centers were developed. In addition, the possibility of more extensive networks of study centers was analyzed. Although there were considerable differences between study centers, there were marked similarities in patterns of student usage. Support services used in distance education in various parts of the world were also reviewed, including Britain's Open University study center network and variations of the Open University theme. Attention was directed to the British tutor-counsellor system, the American mentor system, contract learning, self-help or study groups, and the use of technology. (SW)

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STUDY CENTRES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Report to the Tertiary Education
Commission on the use of study
centres in four distance education
systems.

HE 015 589

J. E. Gough.

Deakin University.
Geelong.
31st October, 1980.

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ABSTRACT

This report is concerned with the use of study centres and study centre networks as a support system in distance education. Information has been obtained by interviewing students, tutors and co-ordinators of study centres within four distance education systems.

These were the University of Queensland, the Riverina College of Advanced Education, the Victorian TAFE Off Campus Network and Deakin University. Differences between study centres were considerable although there were marked similarities in patterns of student usage. A number of deficiencies in study centres were identified.

From these discussions a model of study centres was developed with discussion of a variety of ways in which such a model could be put into effect. Finally the report discusses the possibility of more extensive networks of study centres.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT (i)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (ii)

INTRODUCTION 1

A REVIEW OF THE STUDY CENTRE NETWORK AND OTHER SUPPORT SYSTEMS 6

The Open University Study Centre Network 7
Variations on the Open University Theme 13
Other Methods of Providing Support Services 15
The British Tutor-Counselling System 16
The Mentor and Contract Learning 18
Contract Learning and The University Without Walls 21
Self-Help Study Groups 22
The Use of Technology as Support in Distance Education 24
Conclusion 26

THE PROJECT 28

Aims and Objectives 28
Methods 29
Study Centres 31
Consultant 31

THE STATE CONTEXTS 33

Area, Population and Distribution of Cities 33
Tertiary Institutions and Students 36
Age, Education and Occupational Standards 36

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND 39

Institutional Background 39
History

Admissions Policy
Structure and Courses
University Facilities

External Studies 41

Establishment
Philosophy and Development
Courses and Subjects Offered Externally
External Students
Methods of External Teaching
Teaching Staff
Support Systems for External Students
Study and Tutorial Groups

Study Centres 46

Lecturer Contact 47

Other Support Systems 47

THE STUDY CENTRE NETWORK 47

Objectives
Facilities
Staff
Tutorials and Tutors
Type and Location of Study Centres

PROFILES OF SELECTED QUEENSLAND STUDY CENTRES 51

Gladstone Study Centre 51

Toowoomba Study Centre 55

Mackay Study Centre 61

Nambour Study Centre 71

RIVERINA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION 79

Institutional Background 79
History
Structure and Courses

External Studies 81
History
Courses
Methods of External Teaching

RIVERINA COLLEGE STUDY CENTRE PROFILES 84
- Albury/Wodonga Study Centre
- Griffith Study Centre 92

VICTORIAN TAFE OFF CAMPUS NETWORK 103
- Institutional Background
  - History
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology: An Introduction: 103
  - External Studies at RMIT 104
  - History
  - Students
  - Courses
  - Methods of External Teaching
- The VTOCN System 110
  - Organisational Aspects
  - Off Campus Centres

PROFILES OF SELECTED OFF CAMPUS CENTRES 115
- Gordon Off Campus Centre
- Mildura Off Campus Centre 118
- Frankston Off Campus Centre 121
- RMIT Off Campus Centre 125
- Footscray Off Campus Centre 129
- Bendigo Off Campus Centre 133

COMMENT ON THE VTOCN STUDY CENTRES 136

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY 141
- Institutional Background
  - History
  - University Services
  - Off Campus Studies
  - Philosophy and Methods of Off Campus Teaching
  - Support Systems
  - Study Centres
- The Study Centre Network 149
  - Objectives
  - Type and Location

PROFILES OF SELECTED STUDY CENTRES 151
Melbourne Study Centre 151
Wangaratta Study Centre 155
Mildura Study Centre 160
Albury/Wodonga Study Centre 163
Bendigo Study Centre 165
COMMENT ON DEAKIN STUDY CENTRES 168
DISCUSSION 173
Why do distance education systems develop study centres? 174
What is a study centre? 177
How do students use study centres, and what factors determine usage? 191
Is there a special problem with libraries in study centres? 196
How much do study centres cost? 203
What are the criteria for determining whether a study centre is successful? 205
What is an ideal study centre? 208
Finally, what of more extensive networks of study centres? 212
CONCLUSION 213

LIST OF TABLES

		Page No.
Table One	Table showing state and capital city population for Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.	34
Table Two	Table showing sizes of main cities in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.	35
Table Three	Showing proportion within each age group by State.	37
Table Four	Showing Educational Standards by State.	38
Table Five	Showing occupational breakdown by State.	38
Table Six	Showing partial age breakdown for Wodonga population compared with state average.	84
Table Seven	Showing partial age breakdown for Albury population compared with state average.	85
Table Eight	Showing frequency of students by postcode.	136
Table Nine	Showing distribution of students in kilometres from the Melbourne Centre.	153
Table Ten	Showing the distance students live from the study centre.	159
Table Eleven	Showing distance students live from the Study Centre.	162

Table Twelve	Showing the distance students live from the study centre. (Albury/Wodonga).	164
Table Thirteen	Showing the distance students live from the study centre. (Bendigo)	168

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page No.
Figure One.	Locations of Queensland University Study Centres.	50
Figure Two	Distribution of students at the Gladstone Centre.	54
Figure Three	Showing organisational relationships in the TAFE off campus studies system.	111
Figure Four	Showing location of the VTOCN off campus centres.	113
Figure Five	Organisational structure for off campus studies at Deakin University	146
Figure Six	Location of Deakin University Study Centres	151
Figure Seven	Showing the approximate distribution of students of the Melbourne study centre.	154

INTRODUCTION

Distance education is a growth industry, particularly at the tertiary level. New institutions are being created whose sole business is distance education; institutions that previously took no interest in it are entering the field. Established providers of distance education are trying to increase their share of the market. This burgeoning interest is reflected also in the upgraded quality of educational materials: there have been improvements in editing, graphics and instructional design. Materials in print are being supplemented and complemented by audio and video programs. Telephone tutorials are being used more often. Counselling and advising methods are being extended and refined. Regional networks of study centres are being established.

Much of this development has occurred within the last decade but distance education actually has antecedents stretching far back into history. It could be said that it has its origins with writing itself; the didactic intent of the historians Herodotus and Thucydides is just as apparent in Greece in the fifth century B.C. as it is in the epistles of St. Paul written over 500 years later.

However, only in the 20th century has distance teaching achieved international recognition. Some have seen it as an industrialised form of teaching arising out of new techniques perfected in this century (Peters, 1973). Others, while not denying the importance of new technologies, have seen in distance teaching a remedy for the rapidly escalating costs of labour intensive conventional teaching, in other words, a less expensive alternative. Indeed, cost effectiveness has increasingly become a major factor in this debate.

The possibility of supplementing or even replacing conventional teaching by distance teaching has had wide appeal. For developing countries without enough competent teachers, excellent materials for wide dissemination can be produced by a relatively small but highly skilled work force. In this way, it is theoretically possible to bypass the need for training a generation of teachers, thus significantly reducing the time required for a mass education program. For developed countries, however, the motives are more complex. Here education often helps fill leisure time. This new aspect of education, as well as the more traditional need, can be met relatively inexpensively by distance teaching. Moreover, even in developed countries the rapid expansion of knowledge in areas such as computing and electronics can outstrip the supply of trained teachers; distance education allows the existing experienced teachers to service more students.

The basis of distance education has always been the printed word. In the 20th century, however, new technologies have been used, in some instances quite extensively. Both radio and television open-circuit broadcasts have been supplemented by audio and video replay devices. These reduce time and place restrictions and have often proved useful adjuncts to the printed word. The telephone has added the possibility of immediate interaction that had been lacking in distance teaching. In some instances the telephone has been developed extensively as a teaching medium (Turok, 1977), but its cost and limited development to date have stood in the way of more extensive use.

The Open University in the United Kingdom has been experimenting with other technological developments. Viewdata, is a system in which a television screen is linked to a telephone, which relays "pages" of data stored in a computer. Access to the material is obtained through a small keyboard. The British post office already offers this facility (Prestel) to certain homes; it may be available nationally within the next two years.

The Open University is developing its own system, Optel, which offers more sophisticated options.

In "Cyclops", signals from an audio cassette are transferred to a visual format on a standard television monitor through an aerial input socket. The addition of a telephone link and a light pen for "drawing on the television screen" can make possible student involvement. Through these and other systems the "technologies" of distance education can now embrace all elements of conventional teaching.

Referring to the Open University system, Sewart (1975) notes that the conventional tutorial has been replaced by the use of television, radio and written correspondence; directed reading has been replaced by specially-designed course units; and the study centre has become a base for student interaction.

There is one other significant, and more important change, in distance education: the increasing emphasis on the student learning, rather than the institution teaching, at a distance. Because of this, individual support services have become an integral part of an effective distance education system. Clennell, Peters and Sewart refer to this in their description of the Open University system:

> By linking each under-graduate student at foundation level to a tutor-counsellor and by continuing this association beyond foundation level wherever possible, the Open University has sought to meet a discerned need. It seeks to provide a continuous educational support which cuts across disciplines and across faculties. The frequent contact, whether by face-to-face or other methods, the subject link which is reinforced through the correspondence elements and the provision of sympathetic help in planning a beneficial work pattern, all these generate a sound basis of mutual understanding between students and tutor-counsellors at foundation level which students may rely on through their later studies.
> It is this relationship which breaks down the isolation of the home based student and begins to encourage and shape the effective dialogue which is the basis of education. There has always been a perspective which regards education as personal development rather than helping people to memorise information. The continuity of contact and concern which is the basis of the relationship between a tutor-counsellor and a student facilitates this personal development.
>
> (Clennell, Peters and Sewart, 1977).

This individual approach must be viewed in the context of similar approaches that have been adopted in conventional teaching, particularly at the primary and secondary level, since World War II. In distance education such services have had to be adapted to the student population. A variety of systems has therefore arisen, depending on the geographical distribution of students, their level of study, length of study time and other factors.

In the last decade there has been a confusion between 'open learning' - referring to openness of access - and 'distance learning' - referring to freedom from the constraints of space and time. This confusion has particularly arisen from the Open University, where distance education at a university standard is offered to students who do not possess conventional university entry requirements. Distance education has opened new vistas to the adult learner and provided a 'second chance' for a large percentage of the population. The conceptual aims of the British system were reflected across the Atlantic in the Carnegie Commission on High Education, which stated:

> Society would gain if work and study were mixed throughout a lifetime, thus reducing the sense of sharply compartmentalised roles of isolated students versus workers and of youth versus isolated age.
>
> (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1971).

Having stated all of this it is clear that distance education presents a paradox. On the one hand, efforts are being made to construct for the learner an educational experience that will be intellectually complete and academically respectable; theoretically it may be enjoyed without attending the campus, (all courses may not achieve such an aim, however, and some distance education systems do have attendance requirements). On the other hand there are increasing efforts to improve communication and interaction between the distance student and his teacher, and between the students themselves. Indeed, there have been efforts to make provision for attendance at centres other than the main campus. Amongst the more obvious efforts to achieve these aims are the networks of study centres being set up by distance education institutions.

This study examines some such networks to see what they offer, how students use them, and to what extent they contribute to an effective distance education system.

A REVIEW OF THE STUDY CENTRE NETWORK AND OTHER SUPPORT SYSTEMS

This review describes support services used in distance education in various parts of the world. One of the more visible of such systems is the study centre network. Perhaps it is the British Open University that has developed this network to its fullest extent, although other institutions, such as the University of Queensland, had established study centres long before the Open University even existed.

The first section of this review describes the study centres as a support service developed in the Open University. It also describes subsequent adaptions established by other distance education systems throughout the world. The second section looks at other support services, including the British tutor-counsellor system, the American mentor system, contract learning, self-help or study groups, and the use of technology.

Some comments about definition are appropriate at this point.

The study commenced without any attempt to formulate a definition of the term 'study centre'. If an institution used the term 'study centre', it was accepted as such for the purpose of this study. An exception is the Albury campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education. It began as a study centre but later was designated a secondary campus rather than a study centre.

It may now be useful to offer a tentative definition that emerged as the study proceeded. It is an interim definition:

A study centre is a physical facility provided by an institution

. normally at a location remote from the main campus, often using the facilities of another institution or organisation, and

- providing students of the remote institution access to facilities and services needed for their courses, but

without the academic or administrative responsibility for those students passing fully either to the study centre or to the institution 'hosting' the centre.

These seem to be the essential elements of a study centre - it is a physical entity, it may or may not be attached to a local institution, it provides facilities and services, and it does not have administrative or academic responsobility for the students. The question of definition will be taken up later in the discussion.

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDY CENTRE NETWORK

In January 1971 the Open University started a teaching program designed to provide a unique, university-standard education. Clennell, Peters and Sewart wrote about the difference between the Open University and the traditional university:

> The University was open in the sense that its courses were available to students irrespective of their occupation or previous educational background. It was not residential and its students would be working for their degrees in their spare time from their own homes wherever they lived in the United Kingdom. In addition, the university was open normally only to adult students over the age of twentyone.
>
> (Clennell, Peters and Sewart, 1977: 1).

The same authors described other problems faced by many of the Open University students: work pressures, domestic demands, and the more technical study problems of work scheduling, concentration and memory. Because of those problems, they noted the need to provide effective support services for students; however, they also noted that high motivation should be considered in the selection of students.

The Open University established a regional network of study centres as one form of support service. Some 260 of these centres, usually in other educational institutions and open only in the evenings, were established throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They were located in areas of high population, or where transport links were good. Every student was attached to one of these study centres and to one of the 13 regions of the Open University's decentralised system.

Each of the 13 regions has its own regional director who is responsible for providing local services to support independent learning. These services include:

. Maintaining contact with local organisations (education authorities, public libraries, employers) to ensure maximum benefit from facilities in that area.
. Running the local study centres and appointing local tutor-counsellors and course tutors.
. Liaising with central staff in the organisation of summer schools.

The Open University student works mainly at home. Attendance at the study centres is voluntary.

These study centres are one part of a complex student support service, which includes tutor-counsellors and tutors. As Clennell, Peters and Sewart write, the study centres

> offer students a range of facilities which can supplement some of those available at home, but above all, they enable students to meet each other and to learn from each other in discussion groups. The study centre is also the focal point for the undergraduate students' meetings with tutor-counsellors.
>
> These meetings are an important element of the program at foundation level where numbers normally allow provision for local contact.
>
> (Clennell, Peters and Sewart, 1977: 5).

The main purpose of this contact is to help students both academically and personally. Correspondence units and broadcasts provide the student with both information and guidance in a standard package. It is through the tutorial and counselling system, however, that this standard package is interpreted according to the students' individual needs.

These writers go on to say,

> When they begin their studies, undergraduate students are assigned to a tutor-counsellor at their local study centre. The tutor-counsellor will normally be responsible for all teaching and counselling in the foundation year, although in some instances (the science foundation course, for example) specialists may be brought in.
>
> The tutor-counsellor is available at the study centre on a fairly regular basis and may discuss strictly academic matters; he or she might also deal with study skills on a much wider basis as well as reviewing and assisting with the student's overall progress. As either a supplement or substitute (in cases where students do not attend study centres) contact between the tutor-counsellor and students is maintained by other means, including correspondence and telephone. In addition, the tutor-counsellor is responsible for assessing the material sent in by individual students. When the undergraduate student advances to post foundation level courses, the correspondence then is provided by a specialist course tutor who might also meet students for tutorials or contact them in other ways.
>
> The tutor-counsellor then provides stability and continuity in the life of the Open University student; he or she acts as a 'general educational advisor' at a local level, throughout the student's educational career.
>
> (Clennell, Peters and Sewart, 1977: 6).

The report of the planning committee on the Open University (1969) recognised the 'great advantage' that could result from face-to-face meetings. The development of the counselling service was of particular importance to the planning committee. Part-time, face-to-face teaching and group discussions were to be components of a 'fully integrated teaching system', and the establishment of 'study' or 'viewing' centres was seen as a matter of urgency. It is worth noting that the report, while affirming the principle of home-based study, did not describe face-to-face meetings as optional or peripheral. Indeed, along with 'summer schools', they were seen as highly desirable.

The term 'study centre' dates from 1971, when the Open University was contemplating its first intake of students. Then only four foundation level courses were available; some 25,000 students were admitted to these courses. The establishment of such centres was considered essential. They were equipped to receive BBC television and VHF radio. Face-to-face meetings were encouraged at the study/viewing centres as part of the complete system.

The term 'study centre' soon replaced the original term 'viewing centre'. The words invite interpretation which might now, as the regional system has developed, appear somewhat misleading. The word 'centre' could imply a single place where local services to the student are concentrated, and where all local students focus their energies while they learn within the system. Moreover, the term 'study' might imply provision for private study away from the pressures of the home (this was certainly seen as a possibility at the beginning). In addition, the word 'study' might imply the co-operative study of groups under the guidance of tutors. It was hoped that the student attached to a given study centre might also begin to identify with it and achieve some form of corporate identity, so that a sense of community amongst the students might emerge. This sense of community then would find expression in social as well as academic activities.

That was the theory. We find the practice different in 1980. Students focus on the local centre only at foundation level and in the preceding advisory and induction phases. Although all students following post-foundation courses are assigned a tutor-counsellor, the majority do not come to the centre to see the tutor. Rather, they use the telephone or mails for contact. Very little viewing or listening takes place in the study centre; much of the open circuit broadcasting takes place when the study centre is closed. Likewise, little use is reported of replay facilities. As a result, after only two years, the Open University had stopped providing Technicolour cassettes in study centres. Since 1978 it has sent audio cassettes directly to the students' homes through postal library system.

After foundation level, tutorials take place only in larger and often distant towns (especially true of laboratory sessions where special equipment is needed), since the average course population at that stage is less than 500, that is, an average of less than two students at each local study centre. Further, larger study centres used as central venues cannot cope either with the increased demand of the special requirements of some courses or the number of tutorials held on Saturdays. Additional premises have to be used. On the positive side, computer terminals (which exist in most study centres and are linked to three main computers) are used extensively by students, especially those studying mathematics, science and technology. Furthermore, installation of a variety of additional resources, such as Viewdata and Cyclops, is being planned for local study centres; these will necessitate student attendance at the study centre.

Thus, the original notion of a corporate life for the study centre is not a reality in most cases. Though real and valuable when it occurs, it seems to depend not only on the congeniality of the centre but also on the disposition and character of a few energetic students.

Costs, however, have not changed. In the Open University it was originally expected that the cost of the study centres would be three pounds per student. In reality, the total cost in 1971, when there were 25,000 students, was £55,000. In 1980, with over 70,000 students, the cost has increased to £200,000. It seems remarkable that this figure still remains within the original estimate despite considerable inflation over the decade. However, Open University study centres normally are in educational institutions. Since the centres are open only on weekday evenings, the additional cost to the host institution is marginal.

A number of papers have been written on the success of the Open University study centre system. Bradford, (1979), for instance, writes that attendance at admissions advisory services, induction meetings, and counselling sessions, conditional registration meetings and social events, as well as the organisation of self help groups and the vitality of student associations and committees, are all factors in the success of a study centre. Other factors may be relevant, such as accessibility, average distance from home, adequacy of public transport, comfort and atmosphere, type of building, room furnishings, coffee facilities, proximity of rooms, opening hours and the attitude of caretaking staff. However, he classifies these factors as 'details' and identifies the two principal reasons for the success of a study centre as the role of the tutor-counsellor and the type of institution in which the centre is housed.

Kirk (1978) supports Bradford's emphasis on the importance of personal contact as a vital component in the success of the study centre. The personal contacts between student and tutor-counsellor are also seen as important factors by Mills (1978).

The role of the study centre has changed greatly from the original concept. Leaving aside its special function as a location for a computer terminal, it would appear that the study centre in the Open University can be described as the place in which the tutor-counsellor frequently operates. Tutorials (other than at foundation level), self-help groups and student corporate life are not by any means common to all study centres. The tutor-counsellor, however, is the 'face' of the Open University to its students and the focal point of its student support services. The tutor-counsellor, therefore, is probably of prime importance in the success rate of students. The success of a study centre is, to a great extent, dependent on the tutor-counsellors there. In the final analysis the study centre is merely a convenient base for their work. Indeed, tutor-counsellors operate effectively in certain areas without such a base; this has always been the case in the north of Scotland and the Western Isles.

If this analysis is correct, then the tutor-counsellor is the vital element in the student support service in the Open University. Study centres are peripheral. Contrary to the original intentions of the planning committee, study centres may be superfluous elements in the Open University. Removing study centres from the range of support services, probably would not have drastic repercussions in the overall system.

VARIATIONS ON THE OPEN UNIVERSITY THEME

Fletcher (1975) comments that the Open University of Great Britain has provided greater impetus toward developing options for higher learning than any other educational movement in the last 100 years. West Germany, Japan and South Africa have been influenced by the British model. However, Fletcher states that the impact of the Open University has been felt most fully in the United States of America.

That impact can best be seen in the external degree programs of Empire State College (ESC) and Syracuse University, both in New York state.

Empire State College's administrative headquarters are in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Instead of a central campus, however, it operates through a statewide network of 29 'learning facilities' (Gross, 1976). Some are complete 'learning centres', staffed with a number of full-time faculty members and administrators. Others, called 'units', are more modest, often directed by a single co-ordinator and several faculty 'mentors'. These learning centres are more akin to the Open University regional offices than to its study centres.

The major learning centres are in Albany, New York City, Long Island (suburban New York City), Rochester, Suffern and Buffalo. Each has a dean, administrative support staff, and a faculty of 13 to 15 full-time 'mentors' who assist up to 500 students in developing individualised programs of study. A mentor usually supervises about 25 to 30 students, seeing each one twice a month, sometimes once a week.

Keller and Meskill (1973), describe the future plans of Empire State to establish 'satellite' centres that would provide learning centres within commuting distance for most citizens of New York. Each would be administered by the dean of the regional centre. The 'satellite' centres would be responsive to changing needs and conditions locally; they could be expanded or discontinued as necessary.

An example of one such satellite centre, established in Manhattan's Regional Learning Centre, is called the Centre for Labour Studies. The Regional Learning Centre has a small core faculty of mentors and a supply of teaching and study materials. Each satellite would be staffed by at least one full-time mentor or counsellor, and a complement of part-time faculty and tutors. This would be enough to serve the specialised needs of the local students.

Gross (1976) reports that the ESC centres also probed their communities to work out co-operative arrangements with business and social agencies. However, no evaluation reports have been published yet.

The study centre as a support system in distance education has been used in other parts of the world, including Europe, Asia and the southern hemisphere. In most cases the British Open University model has been used, either directly or indirectly, in an adapted form. The Fernuniversität in Hagen set up a system similar to that of the British model, with some 15 study centres. No evaluative reports have been published yet, however. The Fernuniversität also has 'mentoren', but they do not have special responsibilities for specific students as do tutor-counsellors in the Open University.

The Allama Iqbal Open University of Pakistan has eight regional study centres controlling a network of smaller local centres. This university also has a tutor-counselling system based on the British model.

In the southern hemisphere, both Australia and New Zealand use the study centre as a support system in distance education. In Australia, Deakin University, the University of Queensland, and other tertiary institutions use different types of study centre systems to suit the particular needs of each individual system. Whilst these may have some similarity to the study centre system of the Open University they have developed independently and owe little to the British system.

Massey University in New Zealand uses a system of local and area student convenors, acting as representatives of the External Students' Society, in centres throughout the country. In addition to promoting local study groups, conducting book exchanges and study skill seminars, and organizing activities related to extra-mural study, the convenors serve as a local source of information about study and facilitate communication between students and their management committee based at Palmerston North.

Since the present report suggests that it is the O.U. tutor-counselling system, rather than the study centres, that is the key to its successful support system, it might be useful now to examine the American mentor and the British tutor-counsellor system. Likewise, it might be helpful to describe contract learning and other variations of student support systems used in distance education. In view of recent observations on the uses of study centres in the British Open University some interesting questions may be posed. For example, is the study centre nothing more than a four-walled 'shell' that houses the real 'egg' - namely, the personal interaction offered by a tutor-counselling or mentor system? If it is, will the use of the study centre as a student support system lose significance and make way for alternative and more efficient means of support for students? In short, is the study centre as a support system becoming obsolete? These and other questions will be returned to in the discussion later in this report.

OTHER METHODS OF PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES

Until recently the hypothesis that face-to-face teaching and the presence of student peer groups could not be adequately replaced in distance teaching received almost universal acceptance. In the last decade and particularly in the last two or three years, however, that hypothesis has been challenged by the success of the Open University and other distance education systems.

The educational press confidently predicted a 90 per cent drop-out rate when the Open University first began. Instead, up to 60 per cent of the students are graduating. In most Australian tertiary institutions with well developed distance education systems, students at a distance perform as well as or better than their on campus counterparts.

At the Open University it was found that a very significant proportion of the 40 per cent 'drop-out' rate is unavoidable. Students leave their studies for various reasons, including the obvious cases of death, significant changes in domestic circumstances, or the satisfaction with completion of one part, rather than the whole, of a degree program.

The popular conception of the Open University is that of a system dominated by a highly structured package of correspondence texts and broadcasts. The package and its production are widely copied. However, the success of the British Open University does not rest entirely on this highly structured teaching package, but rather on the interaction of the student with that package, an interaction supported by the counsellors and tutors in the regions. The success of the British system is based on the combination of these elements.

The British Tutor-Counselling System

Open University support services are offered through tutor-counsellors in some 260 local study centres throughout the United Kingdom. In addition, students are assigned to specialist tutors who deal with the academic content of the course and mark assignments. The function of the tutors is exclusively related to the teaching package.

Clennell,Peters and Sewart (1977) identify counselling in the Open

University as distinctive. Its origins are embedded in the Report of the Planning Committee (1969):

> Because of the range of choices inherent in the degree pattern, 'the openness' of the university, and the possibility that many students may wish to enrol who are not at a stage when they could profitably pursue degree studies, we consider the development of the counselling service to be of particular importance. It will be the means by which the university can reduce to a minimum the number of students who embark upon courses only to find that they cannot continue with them.
>
> (Report of the Planning Committee, 1969: 51).

Over the years, the initial counselling model has undergone certain changes. However, its function in the Open University remains vital to the success of the students.

The underlying concept of the British tutor-counselling system is "continuity of concern". By linking each undergraduate student to a tutor-counsellor at foundation level and continuing this association beyond that level, the Open University provides continuous support which cuts across disciplines and faculties. Clennell, Peters and Sewart (1977) describe the relationship between the student and the tutor-counsellor as one which breaks down the isolation of the home-based student and develops the effective dialogue that is the basis of education. They note that this same relationship is effective in achieving the broader educational aim of personal development.

The tutor-counsellor, therefore, emerges as the 'face' of the university. He or she becomes the bridge between the student and the institution. The tutor-counsellor is a mediator between course, tutor and student, ensuring that students understand the role of tutors and the support services available within the Open University.

The tutor-counselling service is staffed by part-time, specially trained educational counsellors.

The student-to-counsellor ratio is approximately 30 to 1. The main task of the tutor-counsellor is to provide students with information and advice on a range of educational matters. When necessary, they refer students to expert advisory services. Tutor-counsellors also provide individuals with an opportunity to discuss their progress and future personal development. Tutor-counsellors might, however, offer specific advice in certain areas, including information on credit exemptions, summer school, registration, withdrawal procedures, examinations and honours degree requirements. They might also advise students on assignments, obtaining materials, appeals and other matters.

Clennell, Peters and Sewart (1977) note that many of the best ways tutor-counsellors get to know their students well are informal. Although the study centre might be a convenient meeting place for the student and tutor-counsellor, it would appear that the use of the telephone and informal meeting places such as private homes and even the local pub, for instance, are more frequently used for this purpose.

The British Open University now employs some 2,000 tutor-counsellors. They are responsible for approximately 70,000 students. That the Open University allotted approximately one quarter of its 1978 budget to this student support system reveals the importance of this service to the university.

The Mentor and Contract Learning

In the United States the success of the Open University stimulated an interest in the type of support services used by the British. Whilst not necessarily stemming from the tutor-counsellor system, the 'mentor' system and contract learning, illustrate a similar concern to develop appropriate support for students.

Expire State College was founded in 1971 and emerged rapidly as one of the 14 liberal arts colleges in the State University of New York system. Its mandate was to develop alternative approaches to higher education for those who could not or would not attend formal classes on a traditional campus. Therefore, the student population consists of working adults with a full range of professional and personal responsibilities. Their profiles are similar to the average Open University student.

In the ESC academic program, the student's own objectives - personal, professional and intellectual - are assessed together by mentor and student, and a personal program is drawn up. The system then operates on this individual learning contract between student and mentor. Hence, the term 'contract' learning.

The mentors function in a variety of roles. Bradley describes their functions in this way:

> Like other faculties, mentors are trained in and represent the various disciplines, but they must work often beyond the boundaries of their disciplines and apply their intellectual skills more broadly.
>
> (Bradley, 1978).

Assigned to 25 to 30 students, the mentor initially helps each student develop an individual study program based on past educational and occupational experiences, interests and aspirations, and major activities spelled out in the learning contracts (Stern, 1975). The mentor is then involved in all aspects of the student's progress, including degree program planning and tutorial instruction. Consultation on a weekly or biweekly basis continues throughout the course of a student's enrolment.

The role of the mentor appears to be a very personal one. In making judgments against a general academic framework, the mentor may take into account other factors such as psychological, intellectual, moral or ethical development (Coughlan, 1979).

This aspect of the mentor system sets it apart from the British tutor-counselling. No reports on the Empire State drop-out rate are available.

The idea for the University without walls grew out of the experiences of the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities in the 1960's (Baskin and Hallenbeck, 1972). In late 1969, planning for the University Without Walls (UWW) began with grants from the Ford Foundation and other sources.

A task force of faculty, students and administrators at each institution involved in UWW helped develop the program. It was decided that each University Without Walls Institution should function as an autonomous unit, while the Union for Experimentation Colleges and Universities central office in Yellow Springs, Ohio, would serve as the clearing house and co-ordinating body. Each UWW college had to share its own program. Thus each institution dealt with its own students, building its own strategy for a new program.

After admission to a University Without Walls institution, students embark on an orientation process designed to prepare them for their UWW programs. Of prime importance in the process is a teacher-advisor (the mentor or tutor-counsellor counterpart) who helps the student define learning objectives as well as the development and evaluation of his or her program. This advisor may be a faculty member, an adjunct faculty member or some other person.

Working from an Inventory of Learning Resources, the student and advisor design a program and draw up a learning contract. This initial 'contract' serves as a basis for evaluation of the student's subsequent accomplishments.

Learning activities may include regular classes (at the student's own or another institution), internships, jobs and field experiences, independent study, individual or group projects, and the use of programmed learning materials, including cassette tapes. There are no fixed time schedules. The student may plan his or her experience around a time period that best suits the learning plan.

making it difficult to assess the success of the mentor system and contract learning.

Contract Learning and the University Without Walls

Rather than being confronted with a set of course requirements to be 'fulfilled', the concept of contract learning as described in a Ford Foundation report on open learning (Gross, 1976) places the student at the centre of the educational process. The mentoring or counselling in this method of distance education suggests the need for a highly organised system of support.

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Each student keeps a cumulative record of his or her learning plans, objectives and activities. The student also keeps an evaluation of these experiences. Criteria and time required for the award of the degree are determined by the student and his advisor. Final evaluation of the student's work is carried out by a committee of faculty, students and other persons with whom the student has been working.

The factor of cost effectiveness in higher education has been influential in directing world wide interest to distance education. One of the major objectives of the planners of UWW is that the program, while maintaining (if not improving), the quality of education, should be economical and self-supporting through tuition fees alone.

Self-help Study Groups

The concept of self-help or study groups as an additional source of support in distance education is also a feature in the Open University system.

Clennell, Peters and Sewart (1977), describe this educational process as dialogue. It is dialogue not in the sense of interchange between teacher and student, but in the sense of Socratic dialogue, for the pursuit of knowledge by two or more students who advance towards a goal by mutual stimulus. They emphasise that if a study group is to be successful, it demands an understanding of this concept and a commitment to it on the part of the students.

In some of the Open University regions tutor-counsellors helped initiate and co-ordinate study groups in a number of post-foundation courses. Students were asked if their names and addresses could be released to other students for 'educational' purposes. Study groups were then formed, the role of the tutor-counsellor in relation to these groups being that of a catalyst rather than a teacher. Unlike foundation course groups, which work together with tutor-counsellors most of the time, post-foundation study groups consist solely of students working in a group. A tutor-counsellor or course tutor is only infrequently, if ever, present.

Clennell, Peters and Sewart comment that a successful study group must plan both method to be used and content to be studied. (They note that the foundation year experience that the British Open University student has with tutor-counsellors should contribute toward the success of a study group). Tutor-counsellors may help choose the methods most appropriate for their groups. They identify the following criterion as critical for the success of a study group.

> Its members should have enough confidence in each other to be able to acknowledge freely their own ignorance and uncertainty.
>
> (Clennell, Peters and Sewart, 1977: 37).

They report, as well, that much use is made of the telephone by student groups, not only to consult the course tutor and tutor-counsellor, but also to plan and prepare face-to-face sessions. Sewart (1975) investigated the value of self-help groups as a support in the British Open University, and described the following pilot scheme carried out in the Cheshire area in 1973. A total of 57 groups initially met in late January and early February 1973. By the end of September some 37 groups were still active, having 'lasted' throughout the Open University academic year. Almost all the study groups met in the study centre. Of the 37 groups who met for the whole year, only two met each week; 15 met once a fortnight and 20 met less regularly. Of these 20, most met once every three weeks. The total average attendance of each group throughout the year was 180 out of a grand total of approximately 580. Thus approximately 30 per cent of the students attended regularly throughout the year. From these figures and other observations, Sewart therefore concluded that self-help groups as a support service could be regarded as significantly useful in a distance education system.

Self-help groups have been encouraged in other distance education programs. No evaluative information is currently available for comparison with the British reports, although Massey University in New Zealand has for many years encouraged a system of study groups. The University has developed it to the extent of using an Extra-mural Students' Society to provide a number of student convenors, who are responsible for organising and running a network of study groups throughout New Zealand.

The Use of Technology as Support in Distance Education

Gross (1976) makes the observation that the most direct way to broaden access to higher education is simply to make the best possible instruction available to the widest possible portion of the public. The Open University made use of television and radio to relay teaching to as many people as possible. Across the Atlantic and in Europe, there has been considerable experimentation in the use of media in distance education.

In the United States, the University of Mid-America attempted the widespread broadcasting of courses. In 1971 the University of Nebraska developed the first plan for a television-based open university in the midwest.

The University of Quebec (UQ) created the Tele-Universite in 1972 as a service organisation, and has a counsellor figure within the system similar to the American mentor and the British tutor-counsellor. These moniteurs-animateurs are not academic specialists but persons with backgrounds similar to those of the students. One third are, in fact, enrolled students themselves, and few of the remainder hold any special qualifictions beyond a first degree.

In sweden, the Committee for Television and Radio in Education (TRU-I) launched a university program pilot project between 1967 and 1972. However, unlike the British use of the media, which was totally independent and endorsed by the government, the TRU project encountered problems which caused Vanderhayden and Brunel (1977) to conclude that there can be no efficient multimedia educational service without an important degree of independence.

Teaching at a distance relies now and will continue to rely upon printing. Other technologies have supplemented this but none has replaced it. The telephone, for instance, has offered a direct substitute for student/ tutor interaction. However, the telephone is limited, since tutors and students must have their interchange at the same time. It is further limited both by the requirement of an installation and by the cost of the link. Furthermore, telephone lectures or tutorials between one tutor and a number of students, while far less costly in tutor time, begin to pose some of the disadvantages of radio in that tutors are deprived of non-verbal signals. Tutors using the telephone tutorial tend to teach at their own pace and their students refrain from interrupting.

There are similar disadvantages to radio. The use of audio and video cassettes however, can ameliorate these problems by offering the student an opportunity to view and listen at his own pace. The availability of replay facilities is the only restriction but interaction between tutor and students is virtually non-existent within this medium.

Printed material, radio and television, then, can be used only for the simple transmission of subject matter. Assuming replay facilities, all can be used at the student's own pace. With the wide dissemination of equipment in recent years all are, or could be, independent of a fixed location. They are, however, the tools of teaching at a distance and do not permit interaction. Only the telephone offers this.

Despite the drawbacks, an Open University report in 1979 advocated technological innovation applied in various forms (Bradford, 1979). It was suggested that such innovations could be used to provide more effective and efficient teaching, learning and the optional use of scarce resources.

Conclusion

It is becoming increasingly obvious that successful distance education systems need a solid background of effective support systems to ensure success for their students. What, then, is the true nature of efficient support services?

Delling makes the following descriptive and definitive statements:

> "What the learner really needs - also in distant study - is someone who can help him, who organises learning opportunities, who learns together with him, who explores and examines (Greek syzetein). In an organisation that develops distant study courses, many different people have different tasks. There exists, however, no job for a 'teacher' there."

He proposes the use of the concepts 'distant study' and 'distant study course', and defines them as follows:

> "A distant study course is an artificial dialogic learning opportunity in which the physical distance between the learner and the helping organisation is bridged by an artificial signal carrier. Distant study then, on the basis of a distant study course is an eight-dimensional system of learning processes and communications processes by means of artificial signal carriers. The dimensions are: the learner, the society, the helping organisation, the goal of learning, the contents to be learned, the result of learning, the distance and the signal carrier.

> The processes are learning processes in the learner, in the society, and in the helping organisation, and communication processes between the three.
>
> The function of the 'helping organisation' is to take over, upon the wish of the learner, everything he cannot (yet) do for himself, with the tendency that the learner eventually becomes autonomous. Finally, the only function left for the helping organisation is that of an information and documentation centre (as, for example, a good library).
>
> (Delling, 1976: 19-20).

Thus support services in distance education should be of a varied nature to provide the best possible learning situations for the individualised style of this method of study. Organisations offering education at a distance need to examine carefully and evaluate the effectiveness of selected support systems, whether they be study centre, the mentor/counsellor system, the use of media or contract learning. Students learning alone and at a distance lack the supportive atmosphere of the tutorial class. They have no one to measure themselves against. They do not know if they are doing well. Easy comparison with their peer group is not possible.

Any system of distance teaching must therefore concern itself not only with "what" it is teaching and "how" it is teaching it, but with the quality and effectiveness of its support services.

THE PROJECT

The preceding review indicates something of the range of support services being developed for students in distance education systems. Variations on the theme of a study centre network are not uncommon. What is relatively rare are studies that critically examine the nature, effectiveness and use of study centres. This study attempts to look at the study centres developed by four Australian tertiary institutions engaged in distance education. It is the first such study in the Australian context. It may be one of the few studies evaluating this kind of support facility.

Four institutions from three states were invited to participate in the study. These were the University of Queensland, Riverina College of Advanced Education, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Deakin University. The selection provides a broad spectrum of both institutions and study centres. Universities, colleges of advanced education and TAFE institutions are included. The institutions range in size from very large to relatively small. They include distance education systems which are only a small part of the institution, as well as those that represent a significant and growing proportion of the institutions' activities. Amongst the study centres there are those that operate on premises owned by the institution, with a full-time academic and administrative staff while at the other end of the spectrum there are study centres that are simply services provided by another institution.

It was believed that these variations might invite useful comparisons about study centre operations.

Aims and Objectives

It is not the purpose of this study to compare one study centre system against another. Essentially the task is to identify the factors that may be relevant to the effective operation of a study centre. The study attempts to:

- examine the aims and objectives for which study centres were set up;
- determine how well and in what ways study centres are meeting these objectives;
- ascertain what use students make of study centres, including which students, under what circumstances, and for what purposes;
- find out how an institution decides to set up study centres and what factors influence decisions about the location of centres and the kind of centres to be established;
- look at the co-operative arrangements that are developed and to see how satisfactory these are to the various parties; and
- analyse any cost benefit data that may be available.

The study will also consider whether it is possible to identify criteria or guidelines that might be used when institutions are considering the establishment of study centres. Finally the report will address itself to the possibility of establishing one or more networks of study centres on a wider basis than now exists.

Methods

The investigation has been designed in two stages, dictated substantially by the requirements to provide at least an interim report by June 30th, 1980.

The first stage of the investigation is largely descriptive. It entails gathering information about the three states to see if there are variables significant to study centre networks. Similarly, the participating institutions are described, including their philosophies and practices in respect to distance education. Finally, information is gathered about particular study centres and each is set within the context of its own community.

Information gathering proceeded largely on the basis of examining written documents and interviewing administrative and teaching staff and students. These interviews, both individual and group, were conducted using a structured interview schedule. A number of interviews were tape recorded. Questions were asked on the following topics in reference to study centres:

Location and convenience
Equipment, accommodation and facilities
Access
Staffing and staff functions
Library facilities
Functions and frequency of usage, including
- tutorials
- orientation meetings
- self help study groups
- information/assistance from staff
- social functions
- private study
- lecturer visits/seminars/workshops
- audio visual
- library

Management and organisational relationship
Financial arrangements

Interviews with students were conducted using a schedule of detailed questions. As interviews progressed, this instrument was refined. In the light of student responses, a mailed questionnaire has been developed for use in the second stage of the study.

Stage two of the study will consist of a mailed questionnaire survey to elicit opinions from representative samples of students about those aspects of study centres that seem important to them. This material will be analysed and used to test propositions generated in the first phase of the study.

Study Centres

The following study centres have been selected for the purpose of this study:

- Queensland University
    - Toowoomba
    - Mackay
    - Nambour (Sunshine Coast)
    - Gladstone

- Riverina College of Advanced Education
    - Griffith
    - Albury

- Victorian Tape Off Campus Network
    - RMIT
    - Footscray Institute of Technology (TAFE division)
    - Frankston Technical School
    - Bendigo College of Advanced Education (TAFE division)
    - Gordon Technical College (Geelong)
    - Sunraysia Community College (Mildura)

- Deakin University
    - Mildura
    - Bendigo
    - Melbourne
    - Wangaratta
    - Albury

Consultant

Because of the relative paucity of research in this area, and acknowledging the extensive work of the Open University in developing a regional network of study centres, Dr. David Sewart, Assistant Director of Regional Tutorial Services at the Open University served as consultant to the project. As the consultant, Dr. Sewart spent a month in

Australia. He visited Toowoomba, Wangaratta, Melbourne and Geelong. Dr. Sewart read much of the draft material and, in particular, contributed extensively to the chapter reviewing the developments both in the Open University and elsewhere in the northern hemisphere.

THE STATE CONTEXTS

Before examining the study centres it may be useful to consider briefly the states in which these study centres are found: Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

The states differ in terms of area, population and distribution of cities according to size. There are also differences in the number of tertiary institutions and students.

However, the states are rather more similar in respect of age structure, educational standards and occupations.

Area, Population and Distribution of Cities

In terms of area the study deals with Australia's second largest state, Queensland (1,727,200 square kilometres) and its second smallest, Victoria (227,600 square kilometres). New South Wales falls between the two, with an area of 801,600 square kilometres.

Population is also varied. New South Wales is the most populous of Australia's six states, with 4,914,300 people; Victoria has some million or so less, with 3,746,000 residents; while Queensland is the least populated state of the three, with 2,111,700 inhabitants (Characteristics of Population and Dwellings, 1979).

No conclusions are being drawn from these differences except to suggest that the larger the state and the more dispersed the population, the farther people may be prepared to travel to a study centre. The grounds for such an hypothesis are simple; people in the larger state are more used to travelling greater distances.

All three states boast one major city, respectively Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Table One shows the relationship between these capital cities and their state populations.

TABLE ONE

Table showing state and capital city population for Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Pop. State	Population		Capital City Population as a Proportion of State Population
	State	Cap.City	
Queensland	2,111,700	985,900	46.7
N.S.W.	4,914,300	3,094,800	63.0
Victoria	3,746,000	2,672,200	71.4

(Year Book Australia, 1979: 79-80).

Each also has a number of smaller towns ranging from 15,000 to 165,000 inhabitants. However, only Victoria and New South Wales have similar distribution of city sizes, a 'primate' type with the major city dominating the distribution. In Queensland, cities exhibit more of a 'rank size' distribution, in which the largest city is not so dominating and the next three or four cities are roughly equal in size.

Table Two shows the major cities and their populations for each of the three states.

TABLE TWO

Table showing sizes of main cities in Queensland,
N.S.W. and Victoria (1976)

Queensland	N.S.W.	Victoria
Brisbane	Sydney	Melbourne
985,900	3,094,800	2,672,200
Gold Coast	Newcastle	Geelong
94,014	251,132	122,080
Townsville	Wollongong	Ballarat
78,653	197,127	60,737
Toowoomba	Shell Harbour	Bendigo
63,956	37,316	50,169
Rockhampton	Maitland	Shepparton
50,132	36,030	25,848
Cairns	Wagga Wagga	Waarnambool
39,305	32,984	20,195
Mackay	Albury	Moe-Yallourn
31,522	31,954	18,710
Bundaberg	Broken Hill	Wangaratta
31,189	27,647	16,157
Mt. Isa	Tamworth	Morwell
25,377	27,273	16,094
Maryborough	Cessnock	Traralgon
20,670	16,256	15,089

(ABS 1976 Census: Population and Dwellings in Local Government and Urban Centres).

Again, no conclusions are being drawn from these differences beyond noting that absolute population size and distribution may have a bearing on the viability of study centres.

Tertiary Institutions and Students

Queensland has three universities and 10 colleges of advanced education. Total enrolments in 1978 were 21,958 and 20,138 students, respectively.

New South Wales has six universities and 24 colleges of advanced education. Total enrolments in 1978 were 61,216 and 35,260 students, respectively.

Victoria has four universities and 23 colleges of advanced education. Total enrolments in 1978 were 31,861 and 52,232 students, respectively (Selected University Statistics, 1978, 1979).

Age, Education and Occupational Standards

The three states are broadly similar in age structure, with the exception that Queensland has a greater proportion within the 0 - 19 age group (37 per cent compared with 35 per cent for N.S.W. and 36 per cent for Victoria). Victoria has a lower proportion in the 50 plus age group than the other states (23.1 per cent as compared with 23.8 per cent and 24.3 per cent). Table Three shows the distributions for the three states.

With respect to education, the states show some small differences, as shown in Table Four. Queensland has the highest proportion of the population without educational qualifications.

TABLE THREE

Showing proportion within each age group by State.

State Age	Queensland	N.S.W.	Victoria
0 - 4	9.1	8.6	8.8
5 - 9	9.5	8.8	9.2
10 - 14	9.4	8.8	9.2
15 - 19	9.0	8.8	8.9
20 - 24	8.1	8.0	8.2
25 - 29	8.1	8.3	8.4
30 - 34	6.8	7.0	6.9
35 - 39	5.8	6.1	6.0
40 - 44	5.1	5.5	5.4
45 - 49	5.3	5.8	5.8
50 - 54	5.3	5.7	5.5
55 - 59	4.7	4.9	4.5
60 - 64	4.4	4.4	4.1
65+	9.4	9.3	9.0

TABLE FOUR

Showing Educational Standards by State.

State Educ. Standard	Queensland	N.S.W.	Victoria
Higher Degree	0.2	0.3	0.5
Graduate Diploma	0.3	0.5	0.3
Bachelor Degree	1.6	2.0	1.2
Diploma	3.0	3.0	3.2
Tech.	3.7	4.9	3.5
Trade	9.9	10.0	10.4
No. Quals.	81.3	79.3	80.9

Occupational breakdowns provide a picture consistent with that of education.

TABLE FIVE

Showing Occupational Breakdown by State.

State Occ.	Queensland	N.S.W.	Victoria
Professional	10.3	11.6	12.1
Admin.	6.4	6.9	6.7
Clerical	15.4	17.3	16.3
Sales - Workers	8.1	7.8	7.6
Farmers	10.1	6.2	6.8
Miners	0.8	0.7	0.1
Transport/comm	5.7	5.3	4.7
Tradesmen/ Process Workers	27.4	29.8	32.3
Service	8.0	7.9	7.1
Armed Forces	1.5	1.1	0.9
Others	6.3	5.4	5.4

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Institutional Background

The University of Queensland is one of the largest Australian universities. In 1978 its total student enrolment was 18,517. In that year, 2,822 were studying externally, while internal students numbered 6,184 part-time and 9,511 full-time (Statistics 1978, 1979). The main campus is in St. Lucia, a suburb of the state capital, Brisbane.

History

The University was founded in 1909 by an Act of Parliament, which empowered the university to serve the whole state in the granting of degrees and the diploma of education to students unable to attend lectures at the university.

The University began operations in 1911, with eighty three students. It now has a full range of faculties in the traditional areas of study, and a large external study program. The 2,822 external student enrolments in 1978 represented approximately 15 per cent of the student body. The external program serves the whole state, the Northern Territory, Papua New Guinea and even parts of Asia, the Pacific and other countries.

Admissions Policy

The University of Queensland applies quota limitations on the number of new students admitted to the various faculties. In addition quotas are applied to certain subjects because of resource limitations. Admissions to the university are processed by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

Special conditions are attached to the granting of external status which is principally limited to:

- residents of Queensland, Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea;

- residents of other states who have been previously enrolled at the University of Queensland and find no other university in which to enrol;
- graduates of the University of Queensland;
- members of the Australian armed forces; and
- other special students approved by the Board of External Studies, (Submission to Committee on Open University, 1973).

Structure and Courses

The academic structure of the university consists of 13 faculties. External Studies is a separate division. It has its own academic staff, but also uses the academic staff of relevant faculties when needed. Recently it has been given divisional status in the university structure.

University Facilities

The University Library was established in 1911 and now contains more than one million volumes, as well as microfilm and audio visual materials. The University Library consists of the central library and 16 branch libraries, including the under-graduate library, the biological sciences library and three libraries at teaching hospitals. The staff numbers 200.

The Thatcher Memorial Library caters for the needs of external students. It consists of a collection of over 120,000 volumes. External students and their tutors may borrow books from the Thatcher Memorial Library using a postal delivery system. The university pays the cost of mailing to the student whilst the student pays the return postage.

There are also nine small reference library collections, called the Ringrose Library system, located in a number of the study centres throughout Queensland. These libraries are branches of the Thatcher Library and carry a much more limited range of materials (Department of External Studies Handbook, 1980).

Student services are similar to those found in most Australian universities (Undergraduate Degree Handbook, 1980). However, few of these services have been adapted in any way to service external students. There is, however, an officer appointed by the union to advise external students and to liaise with the External Studies Department.

EXTERNAL STUDIES

Establishment

The establishment of the University of Queensland's Department of Correspondence Studies in 1911 marked the first post-secondary external studies program to operate in Australia. There were three students enrolled (Submission to Committee on Open University, 1973).

For many years the university used a correspondence system. Students who were unable to attend normal internal classes were supplied with lecture notes and study guides.

Philosophy and Development

Three basic principles, set down in 1910, still represent the philosophy of external studies at the University of Queensland:

- external courses would be similar in standard and content to those offered internally;
- external students should be tested with the same, or similar, examinations and receive the same credit as internal students; and
- external students should, as far as possible, receive the same assistance as internal students.

By 1920 the number of external students had risen to 70 (23 per cent of enrolment). By 1930 the number was 285 (37 per cent of enrolment).

Staff increases were principally administrative, since academic matters rested with the relevant internal faculty.

The next decade saw the continued growth of the student numbers studying externally. There was also a change in philosophy; it was felt that external studies required different teaching methods from those used internally.

Several changes took place:

- one week's annual vacation school was introduced in 1947;
- written assignments took on new importance; and
- a special library was established for the exclusive use of external students.

In 1949 the Department of External Studies was established as an autonomous teaching department. This change in the department's role was a response to a number of difficulties arising from both increases in enrolments and the expansion of the external program. Verbatim lecture notes were found to be inadequate; internal courses needed adapting, and internal faculty found their workloads increasing because of external students. Finally, many felt external students should be provided with supplementary services.

The total external student enrolments increased every year until 1971, when it reached a peak of 3,475 or 19.9 per cent of enrolment (Glad, 1972).

Since the establishment of the university, the proportion has fluctuated around one third of the total enrolment, although it reached a peak of 44 per cent shortly after World War II. Since the mid 1950's the proportion has fallen to approximately 15 per cent of total enrolments in 1978 (Laverty, 1972).

Courses and Subjects Offered Externally

The major emphasis of external teaching at the University of Queensland is in the areas of arts and social sciences. Bachelor degrees can be completed entirely externally in arts, commerce, economics, education and law.

Until recently courses and subjects offered externally were the same as those taught internally. The same examinations were also given. Presently, however, some separate external subjects are being offered, and different examinations have now been introduced for them.

The Department of External Studies has responded to increased demand for postgraduate courses by making a Master of Literary Studies degree available in 1979 on an experimental basis. A Master of Education degree by research has been approved but has not yet been offered. Plans are now being made to introduce the postgraduate degrees of Master of Educational Studies and Master of Educational Administration through the external mode. These, however, will probably not be available until 1982.

External Students

For many years the great majority of external students were teachers. Although they still represent 43 per cent of the total (1979), the proportion of housewives, professional and business people has increased. The number of rural workers has reamined at a very low level (0.85 per cent in 1979). As with most other external study programs, the great majority of students are of mature age (96.4 per cent of students were 21 years of age or older in 1978) and almost 80 per cent already hold a degree or other tertiary qualification, (Statistics 1978, 1979).

The greatest proportion of students come from non-metropolitan Queensland, mostly from the southeast of the state and the major population centres along the coast. This follows a distribution pattern similar to the general population. The number of out-of-state external students (1.7 per cent of external enrolment, including the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea) has changed little over the past five years. Fewer students (51 in 1979) now come from the Pacific Islands, Asia, The Americas, Africa and Europe (Statistics 1978, 1979).

The number of students from Papua New Guinea, who in 1970 constituted 14 per cent of the external students, has dropped considerably in the last five years, to 4.3 per cent in 1978. This fall is probably better accounted for by the decrease, during this period, of Australian involvement in the administration of that country, rather than the recent establishment of the University of New Guinea, and its external teaching system (Debnam, 1974).

Students enrol in external studies for varying reasons. Some, like teachers, want to improve or broaden their present qualifications. Others, like housewives, want to gain qualifications to move into a new career. Finally, there are many students who take courses for personal development and stimulation.

The university has found that, on average, external students take several years longer than the minimum specified time to complete their programs. In 1972-3 for instance, the median time to complete a bachelors degree was eight years for those students who studied mainly externally, and ten years for those who studied completely externally (Submission to Committee on Open University, 1973).

The drop out rate for external students, between 15 and 29 per cent in individual subjects, is higher than the rate for internal and part-time students. However, this is not regarded by the university as an accurate representation of student wastage. There are a certain number of students who re-enrol in other subjects; others initially enrol in more than they can manage

Methods of External Teaching

As with most external studies programs, the main teaching materials are in print, covering the content of the equivalent internal lectures in the subject. Supplementary materials include study guides, reading material and bibliographies. These are regularly revised and updated.

Audio tapes and slides are also used in the learning package, though generally for enrichment purposes. While radio and television are not used (due partly to distance) films and videotapes are sometimes made available at study centres.

Feedback to students is also regarded as an important part of the teaching process. While this is partly achieved through study groups, study centres, study schools and country visits by academic staff, these opportunities are not available for all students. Consequently, the marking of assignments and essays is seen as essential part of the feedback as well as of the assessment process.

Teaching Staff

Generally academic staff in the External Studies Department teach the courses and subjects with high student enrolments. In the case of subjects with low external enrolments, teaching responsibility has usually remained with the staff of the relevant internal faculty. Some disciplines, such as commerce and German, have always been taught by the internal faculty regardless of the size of enrolments. There is regular consultation between the 36 academic staff of the Department of External Studies and the relevant internal departments. Furthermore, the external academic staff are members of the relevant faculty board in their discipline. Both the faculty boards and the Board of External Studies provide supervision of the teaching of all subjects.

For many years the Department of External Studies was apparently regarded as a somewhat 'second rate' teaching department in the university. It was often seen as a lower rung in an academic career moving towards an internal teaching position.

Recently, however, the department has achieved greater acceptance. Now, qualifications required for external staff are no different to those of internal staff. Staff selection and career opportunities are the same.

Support Systems for External Students

In addition to the Thatcher and Ringrose libraries, the following support systems are available to the external student.

Study and Tutorial Groups. Students enrolled for the same subject and living within the same area are encouraged to meet and discuss their courses on a regular basis. Where there is a group of four or more students and a suitably qualified tutor can be found, a tutorial group may be formed. Tutorial groups usually meet fortnightly and meet in or are closely affiliated with the nearest regional study centre. The tutor, who maintains regular contact with the subject lecturer, takes more the role of a convenor than a teacher. During the first semester 1979, 128 tutorial groups in 44 subjects were formed at study centres.

Study Centres. There are 13 regional study centres and five information centres throughout Queensland, as well as those at Darwin and Port Moresby. The study centres typically consist of meeting rooms, facilities for use of audio visual equipment, and reference libraries. Administrative and teaching functions are co-ordinated at each centre by an officer-in-charge, a part-time employee of the university. The officer-in-charge is responsible for course counselling and information, administration of the centre, organisation and supervision of study and tutorial groups and supervision of examinations.

Most study centres are located in local high schools. The university, however, owns the centres at Cairns, Mackay and Toowoomba. It leases those at Maryborough and Redcliffe. In Townsville facilities are provided by the James Cook University. In Rockhampton they are provided by the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education.

Lecturer Contact. Tutors are expected to maintain contact with subject lecturers and students are encouraged to telephone or write to their lecturers when they encounter difficulties (Country and Part-time Tutors, 1978).

Other Support Systems. Voluntary schools and weekend seminars are arranged at various times during the year at the larger regional study centres and at the main St. Lucia campus. Also, some experiments currently are being conducted with 'teletutorials' using loudspeaker telephones.

THE STUDY CENTRE NETWORK

Objectives

According to J.R. Laverty (1974) Director of External Studies at the University of Queensland, the school's 13 study centres "provide a focus for the educational activities of external students" and offer "experiences they would otherwise have missed by not attending the teaching campus". Associations with fellow students and tutors at the centre should provide psychological and academic support, especially important as preventative measures against feelings of isolation and remoteness. As Laverty writes, "these psychological factors should not be underestimated, since experience has shown that they sometimes have a devastating effect on isolated students and generally affect all students in varying degrees".

Administratively, the study centre makes decentralisation possible. Tasks that require personal contact, counselling on course planning and study problems, for instance, can be carried out at the centre. In short, the local centre can perform the routine administrative work that is done most effectively at the local or district level.

More importantly, a study centre also will be a local resource centre and a meeting place that, as Laverty (1974) says, "facilitates the formation and operation of tutorial and study groups, simplifies the organisation of tours of duty or visits by the permanent teaching staff, and increases their effectiveness".

The five information centres have been established to provide on-the-spot information concerning the university, its courses and external studies program. The information officer at each of these centres acts as a part-time liaison and publicity officer for the University. The officer is able to give advice on enrolment procedures and other matters.

Facilities

University of Queensland Study Centres typically house a small library collection and learning materials such as maps, films, transparencies, recordings, audio and video tapes. Audio visual equipment is also available. There is an expectation that properly equipped study centres will gain in importance as more emphasis is placed on audio visual materials and advanced teaching methods.

The small reference libraries in the study centre (Ringrose Libraries) contain a relatively restricted number of key books. These local libraries have a close working relationship with the central external studies library, the Thatcher Library, which is reserved for the exclusive use of external students.

Staff

In most study centres, staff are employed on a part-time basis. A part-time officer-in-charge is appointed for each centre. His or her responsibilities include acting as information officer, administering the centre, arranging and supervising tutorial groups and study groups, and acting as examination secretary for the local examination centre. If enough students are enrolled in the same subjects, the officer-in-charge encourages students to meet to discuss their course.

Tutorials and Tutors

If four or more students at a study centre are enrolled in a subject, the officer-in-charge finds a tutor for the group. The type of tutorial group is determined by the number of students involved. There are two categories: Category A, a tutorial with 10 or more students, meets weekly; Category B, tutorials consist of four to nine students, and meet fortnightly.

Laverty says the tutor should not assume the role of lecturer, but should function under the guidance of the Brisbane lecturer: "In some subjects and at certain times, it may be appropriate for him to assist the students by some degree of exposition; however, his work is not to lecture, but rather, by the use of appropriate and varying methods, to guide the students in their study. He should endeavour to stimulate learning rather than attempt to instil specific information and ideas."

The University realises that it is difficult for external students to test their ability to think and write critically and constructively about their new knowledge without tutorial assistance. Laverty says that "the purpose of tutorials is, then, to help students to attain high standards of critical thinking and self expression about the subject being studied". (Country and Part-time Tutors, 1978).

Type and Location of Study Centres

Forms of study centres vary from place to place (Laverty, 1974). In cities where a tertiary institution already exists, a study centre might be located on campus, where facilities are already available. In 1974 study centres of this type were located at James Cook University in Townsville, the Administrative College in Port Moresby and the Darwin

Community College. The university also has several study centres located in high schools. Such centres, however, are considered the least satisfactory since almost 60 per cent of all external students are school teachers.

At Rockhampton the university has leased part of the municipal library for a study centre. Despite its convenient location, centres of this kind are seen as substitutes for properly adapted facilities.

In some cases the university has built its own study centres. From 1974, these publicly-funded centres were situated it Toowoomba and Mackay.

The location of study centres in the Queensland University network are shown in Figure One.

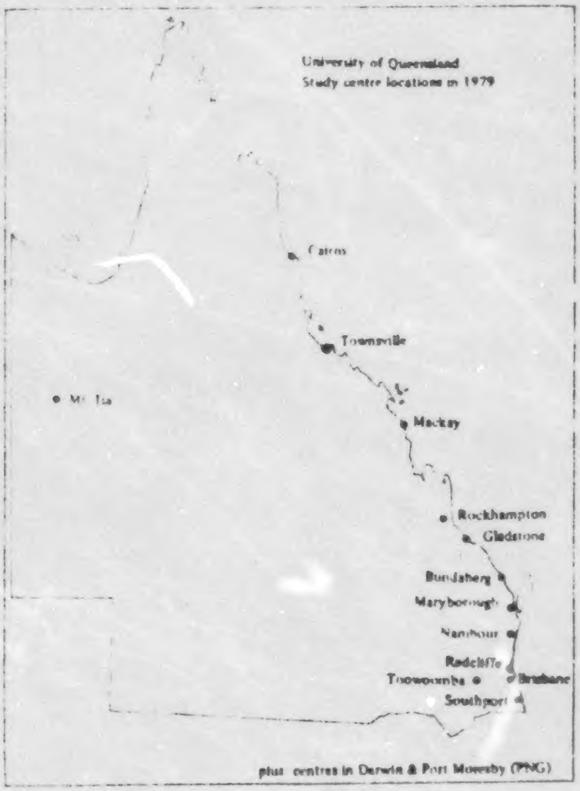
University of Queensland
Study centre locations in 1979
Cairns
Townsville
Mt Isa
Mackay
Rockhampton
Gladstone
Bundaberg
Maryborough
Nambour
Redcliffe
Toowoomba
Brisbane
Southport
plus centres in Darwin & Port Moresby (PNG)

FIGURE ONE
Locations of Queensland University Study Centres

PROFILES OF SELECTED QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY STUDY CENTRES

GLADSTONE STUDY CENTRE

The Port Curtis Education Centre in Gladstone originated in 1975 as a teachers' centre. The building itself was originally a primary school which later fell into disuse. The Education Department then converted part of the building to be used as a resource centre for teachers. Although it is currently being used only minimally for teachers, it is still being administered by the Education Department, which has appointed a full-time co-ordinator to run the centre. The co-ordinator looks after materials and equipment as well as the building itself, and organises bookings for various groups. The co-ordinator works from Monday to Friday, 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The centre is open only during this time.

The centre is currently being used by a number of educational and community groups. The former includes some teachers and the external students of Queensland University. Students from Darling Downs, Kelvin Grove and Capricornia institutes of advanced education also use the centre. Community groups using the centre include Apex, Scope, fishing and football clubs, conservationist groups and other "hobby" groups. The centre, then, is essentially a general purpose community centre rather than a special purpose study centre.

What kind of community does it serve?

Gladstone stands in a natural harbour on Point Curtis in Northern Queensland, about 528 kilometres from Brisbane. The industrial activity of urban Gladstone, shipping, overshadows the hinterland's primary activities of grazing and fruit growing.

Gladstone is a growing community, industrially and demographically. In 1976 the population was 18,900, compared to 15,100 in 1971. This represents a 25 per cent increase over five years, or an annual increase of five per cent. Gladstone has a healthy birth rate, with about 24 per cent of its population under the age of 10 (about 5.4 per cent above the state average). Only 13.1 oer cent of its population is over the age of 50 (some 10 per cent less than the state average of 23.8 per cent).

Shipping dominates Gladstone's economy. Between 1966 and 1970 the annual port traffic increased from 205,600 tonnes, to more than 10 million tonnes. The bulk of this freight consisted of coal exports mined in the hinterlands of Moura and Blackwater. They were sold to Japanese markets. The principal industrial complex in Gladstone, the Queensland Alumina plant, is the second largest exporter.

Over 40 per cent of Gladstone's workforce is employed as production or process workers/labourers, a figure 12.6 per cent higher than the state average. (Characteristics of Population and Dwellings, 1979).

The Port Curtis Education Centre building consists of two large rooms and an office. The two rooms are separated by a dividing wall that can be opened to create one large room. This is used occasionally by schools and other groups for concerts and the like, although the organisers limit such usage due to the presence of equipment and books in the second room. The office is used by the co-ordinator.

The building is weatherboard, typical of most older Australian primary schools. The furniture is old and well used. Floor coverings and other 'comforts' are minimal. Lighting is reasonably adequate. There are no coffee or refreshment facilities available.

One of the rooms is used basically as a teaching room for lectures and tutorials, but is also used by schools for percussion and band groups. Thus it can be very noisy.

The second room houses reference materials and equipment. Although the centre is used by external students of Queensland University, the university does not provide any reference books or materials in this centre.

The students have organised a co-operative lending system of reference books, housed and catalogued at the centre. Reference books are supplied by Darling Downs and Kelvin Grove colleges for their own external students. Capricornia students use the Gladstone public library for reference books.

This room also houses teletutorial equipment, installed and financed by the Capricornia Institute. This equipment is used for telephone tutorials by Darling Downs and Capricornia students, but not by Queensland University students. However, the University is looking into this possibility. Some nine or 10 students can be included in such a tutorial, and students using such tutorials report favourably on them.

Audio visual and other equipment is available on loan from Education Department schools. The equipment includes audio cassette players, slide viewers, video and audio cassettes, and an overhead projector.

As a community centre, the Port Curtis facility appears to be fulfilling a useful function. As a study centre for external students, however, there are criticisms. The hours of opening (9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.) were said to be too limited, since most external students work during the day and prefer evening use of the centre. Secondly, the Queensland University students are not provided with reference books. In addition to the desire for books at the study centre, there were requests for some structured tutor-counselling, rather than only self-help groups.

There are no University of Queensland tutorials operating at the centre at present, and of the various institutions using the centre, University of Queensland students seem to feel they receive the least service. Self-help groups are common amongst the external students of this area, particularly the Queensland University students. These students work in pairs or groups, while a group of teachers from Gladstone State High School have formed a much more structured and extensive self-help group.

It was generally agreed that there was a tremendous need for some organised 'bridge' between a tertiary institution and its external students, particularly in a state like Queensland. The group felt that the Port Curtis Centre was not adequately equipped and organised to provide such a support system. While it was useful as a meeting place for self-help groups and a place for storing reference books and equipment, the hours were inconvenient and only a small proportion of the external students of the area would use it on a regular basis.

To improve this situation it was considered necessary to achieve greater collaboration not only between student users but between the parent institutions. Whilst the possibility of summer schools in the area was canvassed, there was no clear agreement that such a school would meet the needs of students.

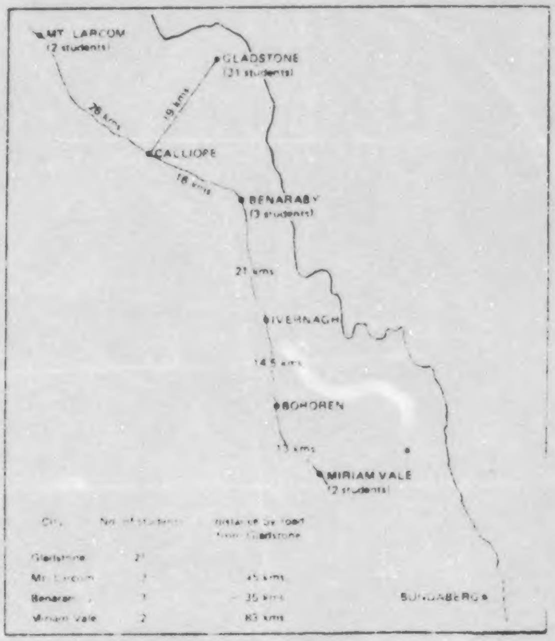
MT LARCOM
(2 students)
GLADSTONE
(21 students)
26 kms
19 kms
CALLIOPE
18 kms
BENARABY
(3 students)
21 kms
IVERNAGH
14.5 kms
BOROREN
13 kms
MIRIAM VALE
(2 students)
City
No. of students
distance by road from Gladstone
Gladstone
21
Mt Larcom
2
45 kms
Benaraby
3
35 kms
Miriam Vale
2
83 kms
BUNDABERG

FIGURE TWO
Distribution of Students at the Gladstone Centre

TOOWOOMBA STUDY CENTRE

Toowoomba lies on the eastern escarpment of the Great Dividing Range, about 130 kilometres west of Brisbane. It is the major urban and service centre of the Darling Downs region. It is also the major tourist centre of the region. (Characteristics of Population and Dwellings, 1979).

This district is a rich agricultural and pastoral region, producing much of Queensland's wool and prime beef. Industries within Toowoomba depend largely upon the primary products of the region. This activity is diverse, catering for all types of food processing (dairy products, bacon and flour), timber, brewing and engineering. These industrial and manufacturing activities employ about 29 per cent of Toowoomba's workforce, a figure some 2.4 per cent higher than the state average. Specifically, 9.6 per cent of the workforce are employed in metal/electrical industries while 6.5 per cent are involved with timber (e.g. building).

The large volume of tertiary-orientated activity in Toowoomba makes it the service centre of the region. About 19 per cent of its workforce are employed in community service, such as the health and education fields. Furthermore, 14 per cent of its workforce, about 3,200 people, are classified as professional, a figure 3.7 per cent higher than the state average. Toowoomba also has a large retail centre; 23.7 per cent of its workforce involved with wholesale/retail trade. Of this figure about 2,500 people, or 10 per cent of Toowoomba's total workforce, are specifically employed as sales workers. Toowoomba also supports a daily newspaper as well as radio and television studios.

Toowoomba is a growing city. In 1971, there were 59,000 people living in the city; in 1976 the population increased to 64,400. This represents an increase of 8.3 per cent over the five years, or an annual increase of about 1.6 per cent. The age breakdown of Toowoomba's population is comparable to state figures, except for the 15-19 age group and the above 65 years age group: 11.2 per cent of the population being between 15 and 19 years of age, 2.2 per cent above the state average. This high figure could be due to the fact that Toowoomba is the major urban centre of the region, thus attracting "school leavers" from the surrounding hinterland.

The cool climate of Toowoomba (compared to high humidity coastal regions) seems to attract retired people to Toowoomba. This could account for the 11.4 per cent of Toowoomba population over 65 years of age, a figure 2.0 per cent higher than the state average.

Dr. Sewart comments on the Toowoomba study centre in the following words:

> The study centre serves a widely scattered community, although a reasonable proportion of students live in Toowoomba itself. Although access on the part of the students seems to be available throughout the day, little real use seems to be made of the study centre and students do not seem to attend the study centre to engage in private study or self-help groups.
>
> Perhaps a major reason for this is the alternative attraction of the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education. Darling Downs appear to allow students of the University of Queensland to use the facilities of its campus on the other side of Toowoomba. In particular, it has a fairly extensive library which is vastly superior to that which is available at the study centre. It would appear that many students of the University of Queensland prefer to use the superior facilities of Darling Downs rather than those offered by the Toowoomba Study Centre.
>
> The Toowoomba Study Centre is geographically situated a considerable distance from the Darling Downs campus and is isolated from other services, being in a residential area. Since it is used exclusively as a study centre, it plays no other part in local educational provision. Study centres sharing accommodation often provide a cross fertilisation of students from the traditional to the non traditional forms of education. There is no possibility of this at Toowoomba.

History

The Toowoomba University Centre began operations in its present location in 1974. The centre's land and the grounds surrounding it were donated to the university by Mr. W.R.F. Bolton, a prominent local citizen. The cost of the building was raised by local subscription. The furniture and equipment were provided by the university which also meets the operating and maintenance costs. The location of the centre is very pleasant but seems a little isolated in a residential area of the town, some two to three miles from the town centre. Prior to 1974 the study centre was situated in the Toowoomba Technical College for 15 years.

The present centre also houses the Lionel Lindsay Gallery of Australian Art and Literature. The gallery holds a small but valuable collection of paintings by early Australian artists, as well as a similar collection of early Australian books.

The Principal of the Toowoomba Technical College served as office-in-charge of the centre until 1978. The present office-in-charge is the vice principal of a local private secondary school.

Facilities and Physical Aspects.

The centre itself is a modern brick building with large walls of glass over looking spacious grounds. The main building and gallery building form two sides of an irregular central courtyard and are linked by a covered walkway.

The building was designed exclusively as a study centre and includes a small library, reception and office area, kitchen, toilets, store room, several smaller tutorial rooms (comfortably accommodating about 12 people) and one larger teaching area. This latter area has provision for the later installation of folding doors which would divide it into three smaller rooms. At present this room would have a total capacity of 60-80 people.

The library in the study centre houses a Ringrose collection. Because the collection is necessarily limited many students prefer to use the more extensive resources and facilities available at the Darling Downs Institute, on the other side of the town. In addition to the small collection of reference materials, the library has a cassette tape-player, apparently the only audio-visual equipment available. Some of the reference material held is in the form of slide kits, but the centre appears to have no slide projector or viewers. (It should be noted, however, that the external study materials provided for students at the University of Queensland make very little use of audio-visual formats). The hours of the library are timed to coincide with evening tutorials. It is also open on Saturday mornings.

Use of the Centre

The Toowoomba University Centre is used exclusively by external students of the University of Queensland. There are presently about 300 external subject enrolments in the area covered by the centre. This would represent some 150-200 students. The catchment area covers a distance of about 60 kilometres around Toowoomba. About half of the students live in the town itself.

Apparently student numbers at the centre fell some years ago when the Darling Downs Institute developed, partly due to its superior facilities and also to the shorter time required to obtain a tertiary qualification at the Institute. In the last few years, however, the number of external students at the Toowoomba Study Centre has stabilized and even increased somewhat.

The centre is used primarily for tutorials and library work. Both students and staff, however, sense that the centre could be used more often for these activities. Little use seems to be made of the facilities for private study or self-help groups.

About 30 tutorials could have been organised at the centre in the first semester of this year. However, only about a dozen were actually operating in mid-year. This was partly due to varied student response and difficulties in obtaining suitable tutors. Tutor positions were not advertised locally this year, since the officer-in-charge anticipated that he could fill these positions with his own contacts. Many of these did not eventuate, however, and tutors could not be obtained for some subjects.

Some visits from lecturers at the main campus are organised throughout the year, and the centre also acts as an examination centre.

Relationship with the Local Community

In many respects the Toowoomba University Centre competes with the Darling Downs Institute, in that they provide the only facilities for tertiary education in the towns. The University Centre really only provides access for external students of the University of Queensland, while the facilities of Darling Downs are far more extensive and are made available to all tertiary students in the area. Consequently, many of the university's external students in Toowoomba make use of the Institute's facilities.

The grounds and buildings of both the University Centre and the art gallery are administered by a community-based management committee. With that situation one might expect a fairly substantial community involvement in the study centre. That does not seem to be the case, however. The art gallery consists of a specialised collection and is in a remote location. Furthermore few, if any, community and educational groups use the facilities. Thus the University Centre seems to be rather isolated from both community and educational networks. It receives no "cross fertilization".

The University Centre does have some contact with the local educational network. The officer-in-charge is also the vice principal of a local private school. This arrangement does appear to have some advantages especially in regard to contact with potential tutors. However, there are also disadvantages. Vice principals usually have a substantial workload in their schools particularly at those periods of the year when study centre demands are high. For some officers-in-charge this represents a major conflict of interest.

There is a small but active group of students who are critical of what they regard as the "stagnant" state of the centre, the lack of adequate tutorials, lack of services and facilities in the centre, and the inaccessability of the officer-in-charge. Some of these students have taken a particularly active role in making these criticisms known at the main campus, consequently putting pressure on the officer-in-charge.

Summary

In spite of this fine facility, the centre does not appear to be operating anywhere near its potential. This may be partly due to the vastly superior library and other facilities available at the Darling Downs Institute. However, it is also clear that there are problems in the effective operation of the tutorial system (often a key to student involvement in a study centre).

The centre has a minimal relationship with the community and the local educational networks. The facilities are principally only used by external students of the University of Queensland. Little, if any, use is made of the facilities by community groups. No other tertiary students in the area use the facility.

The officer-in-charge of the centre finds difficulty in effectively performing his role and making himself accessible to students and tutors due to his substantial responsibilities as vice principal. To some extent, he feels he was "pressured" into accepting and continuing in the position. He clearly feels frustrated and disappointed at not being able to achieve more and intends not to continue in the position after this year. There are significant improvements needed in the External Studies

Department's administrative arrangements, in his view.

Some students attached to the centre have strong grievances regarding what they see as the ineffective operation of the centre and have acted to communicate these grievances to the main campus. It must, however, be acknowledged that other students who were contacted are satisfied with the centre. They find it conveniently located. Tutorials cover a reasonable number of their subjects. They find the library resources a useful aid to their studies. Overall, though, there does seem to be a real problem of under-utilisation of the centre.

The organisation and management of the centre is one of the most complex of all those studied in the Queensland University system. This complexity arises from a number of factors, including:

- the relationship between the centre and the gallery;
- the relationship between the management committee and the University of Queensland;
- a small but active , critical and fairly vocal student group.

MACKAY STUDY CENTRE

History

The Mackay University Centre began in 1966 as a regional study centre. It was established exclusively to meet the needs of external students of the University of Queensland.

The land on which the centre stands, in South Mackay, was donated by the local council. The construction of the building itself was financed entirely by public subscription from the local community. The University of Queensland provided some of the initial furnishings and equipment, and it pays all operating costs. New extensions, which are presently being completed, will provide a larger library and a private study room. They are being financed completely by the University of Queensland.

The building has been vested in trust to the University of Queensland.

McKay is located on the coast of Queensland about 800 kilometres north of Brisbane, embracing 68,500 square kilometres.

The population of the City of McKay in 1976 was 20,200 compared to the 1971 figure of 19,140 an increase of about 5.6 per cent over the five year period. Over 11 per cent of McKay's population is aged over 65 years of age which is two per cent higher than the state average of nine per cent. Although McKay has a below average number of children under the age of ten, 16 per cent compared to the state average of 18 per cent, the 15-19 age group represents an above average figure, 10.4 per cent compared to the 8.6 per cent state average.

Sugar, coal and tourism are the principal industries with beef, timber, fishing, tropical fruit, heavy and light industries also of considerable importance. McKay is referred to as the "Sugar Capital of Australia" by reason of the fact that it produces one third of the total national crop. A total of eight sugar mills service the sugar industry.

Open cut coal mining in the Bowen Basin of the McKay hinterland has emerged as of great importance to the economy of the McKay region. The coal industry has made a valuable contribution to decentralisation. In the 1960's little more than 100 people resided in the coal development area. Today there are 7,000 people residing in the two model townships of Moranbah and Dysart which service the mines. The coal is exported through Hay Point some 16 kilometres south of McKay, one of the largest coal export complexes in the world.

About 30 per cent of McKay's workforce are employed in light and heavy industries, a figure about seven per cent higher than the state average.

McKay is a major retail centre in Northern Queensland with 26 per cent of its workforce involved in the wholesale/retail business. Specifically, 11 per cent of the working population are employed as sales workers.

Facilities and Physical Aspects

The centre is a wooden building of standard Education Department style adjacent to the local high school. It is in a somewhat secluded spot, about two miles from the main city centre, in a principally residential area.

The building consists of:

- two moderately-sized tutorial rooms which can comfortably accommodate 20-30 people;
- one well-equipped library with collections of reference materials from the University of Queensland, Townsville C.A.E., Capricornia I.A.E. and Darling Downs I.A.E., as well as other reference material, (e.g. collection of handbooks of most tertiary institutions in Australia, Hansard and a range of periodicals), a photostat and videotape machine;
- one somewhat smaller meeting room at the front of the centre, with teletutorial facilities; and
- refreshment facilities and toilets.

At the time of the visit to the centre (July, 1980), additions to the centre were in the final stages of completion. These will provide a larger library area thus freeing the present library for tutorials and meetings, and a room specifically for private study, which will comfortably accommodate about 12 students. Students will have a key to this room at all times. These additions will be paid for by the University of Queensland.

A substantial amount of furniture for the new areas has been secured by the co-ordinator from the Rockhampton Study Centre, which has recently been relocated in the Rockhampton C.A.E.

Usage of the Centre

As previously indicated the study centre in its earlier years was almost exclusively directed toward meeting the needs of the external students of the University of Queensland. More recently the centre has become a broader resource centre, providing services and facilities for a wide range of tertiary external students in the area including students from the University of Queensland, who constitute the largest group (139 out of about 400). This change is largely due to the present policy, formulated and pursued by the present co-ordinator with the substantial support of students and staff of the centre, as well as the centre's advisory committee. Other local students associated with the centre include those from Capricornia I.A.E. and Townsville C.A.E. (about 70 and 90 students respectively) as well as smaller numbers of students from Darling Downs , Kelvin Grove, Mt. Gravatt, Armidale, Mt. Lawley, Deakin University, Adelaide C.A.E. and Wollongong.

This year there were about 500 external students from the Mackay area who enrolled initially in tertiary educational institutions leaving about 400 still enrolled at the time of the visit. The co-ordinator estimated that about 250 of these actively use the centre.

As well as the various groups of students using the centre, the facilities are used for some community education activities. For example, English classes were held over several months (full-time) in the Winter of 1980, organised by the Migrant Educational Services, for Vietnamese families who had recently settled in Australia.

All of these activities have created an increasing shortage of space in the centre. The new additions will help to relieve this pressure.

Patterns of Use

Tutorials

As with most other study centres (apart perhaps from VTOCN), students use the Mackay study centre primarily for tutorials.

Under the guidelines of the University of Queensland, local tutors may be appointed where there are four or more students studying the same subject in the area. On this basis the Mackay centre hoped to organise a maximum of 31 local tutorial groups in 1980. In fact, about 23 tutorial groups have been established. Some idea can be gained of the growth of the centre in the last few years by comparing this figure to that of eight tutorial groups operating two years ago.

Visiting Lecturers

Last year there were nine visits by lecturing staff from the main campus of the University of Queensland. Many tutors and students are not satisfied, however, with the extent of visits by staff from the main campus. They feel greater efforts could be made by such staff to visit external students at the centre for lectures and individual assistance.

Library

The library facilities at the centre are favourably regarded in part because the library holds reference collections for four tertiary institutions. Students may borrow from all collections other than those of the institution with which they are enrolled, providing the book is not required by a student of the providing institution. It seems that students make extensive use of these resources. The library also provides a regional postal service for students who live far from the study centre. (This is used particularly by students in the mining areas, about three hours drive away). The work of the part-time librarian is highly regarded by students.

Private Study

One aspect of the Mackay Centre is the extent to which students use the facilities for private study. In other study centres visited, students generally preferred to study at home. Only rarely do students choose to use the study centre (usually because of difficulties in the home environment) for private study. At the Mackay Centre, however, private study seems to be quite common, although it was not possible to quantify it accurately.

Both staff and students offered several reasons for this usage. For one, students desire a quiet study environment away from the distractions at home. Secondly, there is a pattern of distant students visiting Mackay with their families on Saturdays; while the family do the weekly shopping, the student goes to the centre for a few hours quiet study. These patterns of home distractions and weekly visits, however, are by no means unique. It would seem that the actual explanation lies deeper, perhaps in a combination of the staff's encouragement of private study and the unusually strong identification of students with the centre and staff. There is a strong sense of 'community' among all those involved with the centre.

Catchment Area

The majority of students attached to the Mackay Centre come from Mackay and the surrounding area. However, smaller numbers come from the country areas within several hours' drive of Mackay. Also there are a significant number of students in the mining areas (e.g. Dysart), which are about three to four hours' drive to the west.

Relationship with the local Community

The Mackay Centre clearly has very strong links with the local community. The cost of building the centre itself was raised by public subscription, the land was donated by the local council, and, at present, the advisory committee of the centre includes the mayor, the local town clerk and the director of the local Sugar Research Institute. The co-ordinator of the centre is also the T.A.F.E. co-ordinator for the region (although the two are not directly connected) and is apparently well-known and liked throughout much of the Mackay community. Graduations of local students are conducted at the council rooms in Mackay and are apparently quite a public occasion attended by the vice chancellor of the University of Queensland and the head of the External Studies Department.

According to one of the study centre tutors, the general community of Mackay has a 'reasonable' awareness of the study centre. The centre gets fairly regular coverage in the local press. Service clubs are actively involved in raising money for library books and 'the average semi-professional or professional person in Mackay knows that the centre is there and what it provides'.

Relationship with the Main Campus

There are a variety of formal lines of contact between staff and students at the study centre, and the main campus of the University of Queensland.

- The officer-in-charge is responsible to the Department of External Studies for all matters relating to staff, students, and administration of the study centre.
- The University of Queensland Student Union appoints a 'student communicator' to liaise between the external students in the area and the Students Union at the main campus.
- Tutors can contact lecturers at the main campus or the Department of External Studies for matters concerning the courses they are tutoring but this is somewhat infrequent.
- The students principal contacts with the main campus are through the Thatcher Library, receipt of study materials, submission and return of assignments, attendance at residential study schools in Brisbane,

> and attendance at sessions in the study centre conducted by visiting lecturers from the main campus. It is also possible for students to contact the main campus regarding problems with their courses, although this seems relatively rare. Such problems are more commonly raised with the officer-in-charge or local tutors.

The Mackay Study Centre could be characterized as being, in many respects, isolated from the main campus in Brisbane and therefore necessarily fairly independent in its operations. Apart from the obvious geographical distance involved, it seems that tutors have little contact with lecturers at the main campus and are largely left on their own. Visits by lecturers to the study centre are infrequent (about eight or nine last year for all subjects) and, due to other commitments (i.e. work and family) as well as distance and cost, few students are able to attend the residential study schools in Brisbane. The co-ordinator understandably has more contact with the main campus and seemed to feel reasonably satisfied with the accessability of external studies staff and the opportunities for raising difficulties with them.

According to tutors and students interviewed, some of the problems in contact with the main campus included:

Lack of student contact with main campus lecturers. It was suggested that there is a real need for more frequent and longer visits by lecturers from all subjects. It was pointed out that student response to such visits was usually good. Many students would travel from remote areas, up to three or four hours' drive away, to attend such visits. It was also considered that better use of teletutorials (which are quite rare at present) would be an acceptable, though not preferred, alternative to the more costly visits.

The 'turn around' time for assignments. Some people commented that the delivery system was so bad in some subjects that students had not received marked assignments until after the final examination. This problem seemed to be particularly present in subjects offered by an 'internal' faculty of the university rather than the Department of External Studies.

Remuneration to the officer-in-charge and tutors. While staff made little comment, students were almost unanimous in commenting that 'nobody would do it for the money, especially after tax takes almost half', and 'everyone does far more work than that for which they are paid, especially the officer-in-charge'.

Other difficulties expressed were:

- very great differences in the volume of study material sent to students in equally weighted subjects;
- some concerns regarding the adequacy of the study materials, especially for students without the additional support of tutorials;
- the unfairness of expecting external students to do the same examinations as internal students;
- the time for which students could borrow books from the Thatcher Memorial Library (three weeks) not being long enough;
- the timetable for internal students being seen as inappropriate for external students (e.g. "the mid-semester breaks are a 'waste of time' when you are not receiving study materials");
- it taking almost 10 years to complete a degree, a long and discouraging time; and
- the setting of assignments in some subjects being educationally unsound (an example was quoted of a subject in which a single assignment worth 40 per cent of the total marks was required late in the semester with the result that students did not receive their

marked assignments until after the final examination.

Staffing

The Officer-in-Charge

This is a part-time position. The officer is paid an 'honorarium' by the university. The present officer-in-charge is also the T.A.F.E. co-ordinator for the region, and therefore has substantial full-time responsibilities apart from his role at the study centre. The officer does not see these two roles as conflicting and, in spite of the extensive responsibilities involved, he seems to be very actively involved in developing the study centre. He is widely known throughout the local community for his work in the Centre and seems universally respected by students and tutors alike. He does not have a budget, however, for the centre's operational expenditure. Major expenses are paid by billing the university: smaller expenditures are paid by the officer for which he is later reimbursed by the university. These latter expenditures can be fairly substantial amounts (e.g. $50 for postage) and it seems unusual that this procedure should be adopted.

Librarian

The librarian at the centre is also a part-time employee, 20 hours a week, to cover the time when access to the library is most needed. Due to the library holding collections for four institutions having external students involved with the centre, the librarian's salary is contributed to in varying proportions by each of the institutions. This co-operation has enabled the library to stay open longer for all students.

As with the officer-in-charge, both tutors and students express high regard for the present librarian. It was generally recognized that she does far more work in the centre than the hours for which she is paid.

Summary

The Mackay Centre seems to be a remarkably active one, with a high degree of use of library resources, tutorials and private study by students.

There is also an extremely good relationship with the local community with substantial involvement, awareness and acceptance of the centre. The centre does not, however, have a very great involvement with the main university campus and tutors and students are generally fairly critical of lack of support from the university. On the other hand, tutors and students seem to identify very strongly with the centre and see it as being very successful.

Much of this success must be directly attributed to the energy and ability of both the present officer-in-charge and the librarian. The centre seems to support generalisations such as:

- the success of the study centre depends more on the quality of the staff than on facilities or equipment; and
- the more remote a study centre, the more relatively disadvantaged it will be in terms of services provided by the main campus.

In relation to this second point the MacKay centre shows a response to the disadvantage and isolation which is not always seen in other centres. The staff and students of the centre have developed a great degree of pride and independence, which has resulted in an active and successful centre. There seems to be a strong feeling among users of the centre that they are working together to get the best out of the system.

NAMBOUR STUDY CENTRE

History

Established in 1974 the Nambour Study Centre is a very recent part of the University of Queensland's external study network. The present centre is situated in the local high school, a school that had been used as an examination centre by the university's external network for some years previously. The study centre at the school, however, operates quite independently of that role.

Nambour is a town in the south-east of Queensland lying east of the fertile Backall Range on the Sunshine Coast and is about 105 kilometres by rail north of Brisbane.

The main primary activity of the district is sugar-cane growing. Bananas, citrus fruit and pineapples are the other agricultural interests.

The secondary activities of the City are linked primarily with the hinterland primary products and with the tourist trade. In the Shire of Maroochy over 1,100 people or 9.1 per cent of the workforce are involved in the construction/building industry. Over seven per cent of the workforce is employed in the metal/electrical industry. Overall, over 3,200 people or 26.2 per cent of the workforce are employed as production process workers/labourers, a figure which is about three per cent higher than the state average.

The tourist facilities of the area have created many tertiary orientated jobs, especially in the retail and service fields. In fact, 1,315 people or 10.4 per cent of the workforce are employed as sales workers, a figure which is 2.3 per cent higher than the state average. Moreover, just over 1,000 people or 8.0 per cent of the workforce are employed in service/sport or recreation fields. Of the workforce 13.7 per cent are classified as farmers, a figure which is more than three per cent higher than the state average.

The Shire of Maroochy is a growing centre. In 1976 about 32,500 people resided in the region compared to the 1971 figure of 25,500 an increase of 9,700 people. This represents an increase of 38.2 per cent over five years or an annual increase of 7.2 per cent.

The Shire of Maroochy has a relatively low proportion of its inhabitants between the age of 15 and 35 years of age. Only 26.5 per cent of its population fall within this age bracket compared to the Queensland state average of 31.7 per cent, that is a difference of 5.2 per cent. The Shire, which is situated on the Sunshine Coast and is probably an ideal retirement centre, has a high proportion of its inhabitants aged over 65 years of age. Thus 12.9 per cent of the Shire's population or 3.8 per cent more than the Queensland state average of 9.1 per cent.

Facilities and Physical Aspects

The high school consists of a number of older but attractive wooden buildings for administration and classrooms, some newer buildings for classrooms, and a modern and well-equipped library. Most of the buildings, although old, are very open, light, and airy and provide a very pleasant environment. The grounds are quite spacious and attractively landscaped with native trees and plants.

The study centre itself, however, exists largely in name only, as there are no facilities (either rooms or equipment) specifically allocated to the Study Centre or for the use of external students. Classrooms are used for tutorial groups. The tutor makes prior arrangements with the officer-in-charge, who is also the vice-principal of the school. External students do not have access to the school or any of its facilities (including the library) apart from these tutorial arrangements, unless they also happen to be teachers at the school. Even external tutors do not have access to the facilities or library (again, unless they also happen to be teachers at the school). Some of the tutorial groups attached to the study centre do not actually use rooms at the high school but choose to meet at other venues in Nambour or other towns in the Sunshine Coast area (Caloundra and Maroochydore in particular).

There have been some moves, apparently initiated by students, to establish a branch of the Ringrose Library within the region. The location considered most desirable is Maroochydore, where the main public library for the region is situated. The public library and adjacent council offices at Maroochydore apparently offer space for both a Ringrose Library and rooms for a study centre.

The high school is conveniently located on the Bruce Highway, just outside of the main town centre. The school has in fact had a decreasing student population in the last few years (since the opening of a second high school in the town) and is no longer suffering from overcrowding. It is expected that the student population will fall from the present 1,100 to about 800 in the next few years. Concern about security problems caused by keys being too easily available seems to make access to the study centre rather more difficult.

While presumably all students attached to the Nambour study centre are aware of the centre, there is no indication of the study centre in the local telephone book. Neither are there any directions to the study centre within the town itself, nor any signs at the high school indicating that part of it is used as a university centre.

Usage of the Study Centre

For the majority of students, the only facility provided by the centre are the rooms for tutorials. Naturally teachers at the school have access to the school library and equipment such as photostat machines and cassette tape recorders. However, there are no special course materials available at the centre for use by all students.

Approximately 150 external students of the University of Queensland are attached to the Nambour Study Centre. The geographic distribution of students is very wide, stretching from Frazer Island in the north to Kilcoy in the south. Unlike the other study centres in Queensland, the Nambour Centre is not in the major population centre in the region. One consequence of this is that only a minority reside in Nambour. Consequently the organisation of tutorials is an extremely difficult job, since most students are not required to attend as they do not live within the town boundaries. Tutorials, therefore, are not located exclusively at the high school but are organised at other locations within the town (e.g. Burnside High School) and in other towns in the region (e.g. Caloundra, Maloolabar and Maroochydore).

Out of the 66 subjects being taken by all of the students, tutors could only be appointed for 21. In these instances there was a sufficient number of students (four or more) who lived close enough to the centre to be required to attend, and a suitable tutor was found. Nine subjects had sufficient student numbers but no suitable tutor. Of the 21 subjects where tutors were appointed, 10 groups subsequently terminated due to lack of numbers, leaving only half the tutors still operating in the middle of the year.

There are also occasional visits to tutorial groups by lecturers from the University, but no exact numbers of these visits were obtained.

The high school also provides examination facilities for external students. However, this function is separate from the Study Centre, unlike many other Queensland University centres, and the officer-in-charge commented that he had 'nothing to do with the exam supervisors'.

In general, students who are also teachers (and thus have access to facilities and more developed study skills) may find the Nambour Study Centre acceptable. For other students who rely more on tutorials, study facilities and advice, however, the centre is regarded as inadequate.

Relationship with the local Community

The Nambour Centre seems to play very little part in the local community. There is little awareness of its existence apart from students and their associates. The only other members of the community who have some knowledge of the centre are those involved in educational services. Their views on the study centre are less than complimentary, including such comments as:

- the centre is virtually useless;
- there is little, if any, communication with students or stimulation for them to use the centre;
- the centre should become a more integral part of the community and should advertise within the

community; and

- the centre would operate better as a university annexe with lecturers visiting from Brisbane once a week in an extended campus arrangements.

Relationship with the Main Campus

Discussions were held with students and tutors who were also teachers in the High School, students who were not teachers including one who was previously an 'area communicator' with the Queensland University Students Union and with the officer-in-charge, who is also the vice-principal of the high school. The relationship with the main campus will be considered from these various viewpoints.

The major point of agreement between students and tutors at this centre (and at all other centres visited) was the value of the external borrowing systems of the Thatcher Library. All commented that the services are fast and efficient, and a good range of material is available.

Visits from lecturers in Brisbane were seen as very valuable by both students and tutors. It was felt that there should be more such visits. Frequency of visits seemed to vary with subjects: one student said that there were several visits a year in English and Education subjects, but another said that in several years as an external student she had only seen a visiting lecturer once. Contact between local tutors and lecturers from the main campus also seemed to be very limited. Apart from initial contact, there was virtually no telephone contact between tutors and lecturers. Contact it was claimed, was almost always initiated by the tutor. A further aspect reinforcing the isolation of tutors was that the only subject materials they receive are the same as those produced for the students which they receive no earlier than students, thus offering little time for preparation. One tutor commented that he felt he was "left very much on his own" and this indeed seemed to reflect the feelings of a number of staff and students.

Tutorials were also an important issue with both tutors and students. It was felt that more tutorials would be useful. They were generally regarded as a great help to study. Many could not go ahead due to lack of student numbers. Many of those that started 'folded' due to lack of attendance. This is related partly to the ability of the officer-in-charge to find local tutors but also to the guidelines for the setting up of tutorials. For example, a tutorial may be set up where there are four 'local' students doing one subject, but if numbers drop below this level because students fail to appear or withdraw early in the year, the tutorials must be terminated. This seems to result in substantial frustration for the students and particularly for tutors. Tutors may have done much preparation for the first tutorial and because of its cancellation receive no remuneration for the work.

Students also said the range of courses was too narrow (suggesting that they were relevant mainly to teaching), and that greater diversity of courses should be available.

The officer-in-charge commented on:

- particular problems in organizing an effective tutorial system under the present guidelines, particularly with the geographic spread of students allocated to the Nambour Centre;
- problems in obtaining appropriate student information from the main campus when it was needed such as for example subject enrolments or updated enrolment information;
- the honorarium paid to officers-in-charge being inadequate for the work involved, especially considering the frustrations and lack of satisfaction in the job; and
- the need to have a substantial amount of clerical/typing work done by school staff for which the school is not recompensed.

Summary

The Nambour Study Centre seems to provide minimal support services for external students apart from tutorials. These are presently held in only a few subjects a fact which seems to constitute a major source of frustration. Staff and students generally felt that the high school was not the most appropriate location (the T.A.F.E. College was suggested as a better alternative since it is more accessible to external students and operated outside of 'normal hours'). Many suggested that Nambour itself may not be the best location (Maroochydore was suggested as more central, and it was noted that facilities had been offered adjacent to the main regional library). The present study centre has few links with the local community and seems relatively isolated from contact with the main campus.

Furthermore, most felt that appointing the vice-principal of the high school as officer-in-charge was not the wisest move. The incumbent of such a position is not sufficiently accessible to either students or tutors and his many other responsibilities meant that he was unable to devote the time necessary to operate the study centre.

The feeling was strongly expressed that the study centre should have permanent facilities (i.e. tutorial rooms, equipment, study facilities) accessible at times suitable for external students, preferably with clerical or library staff. The need for a Ringrose library collection was strongly emphasised

The general feeling in Nambour is that the present centre is not working very well at all. The officer-in-charge is disillusioned about the operation. He feels that he is unable to devote the necessary time to the centre and does not wish to continue in the position next year. In fact, it seems he felt he was 'expected' to do it because of his role as vice-principal.

RIVERINA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Institutional Background

Riverina College of Advanced Education is the third largest of the advanced education colleges in New South Wales, following the New South Wales Institute of Technology and Mitchell College of Advanced Education. In 1978, Riverina's total enrolment was 3,060, with 594 studying part-time on campus, 1,059 studying externally, and the remainder being full-time on campus students.

The main campus is located on the northern boundaries of the city of Wagga Wagga, incorporating the former Wagga Wagga Agricultural College, retaining that campus and adding an adjacent academic area, the Booroona campus. The region is a major agricultural area, with a number of large irrigation schemes.

Like other colleges of its type in Australia, Riverina offers undergraduate tertiary courses of comparable standard to a university, but with a vocational and practical emphasis meeting the specific needs of a region.

History

From its beginning in 1972, the college commited itself to offer alternatives to full-time, on campus study. Of the first 812 students, 240 studied externally or part-time on campus. The college established small study centres, initially for use by external students, in Griffith and Albury/Wodonga.

The three foundation schools of the college were applied science, business and liberal studies, and teacher education. The majority of the early students were in training to become primary and secondary teachers. A smaller number of students were taking courses in accountancy and administration.

The college is the only tertiary institution situated in the Riverina area, although the University of New England and Macquarie University have enrolled external students from the region. In addition Mitchell College of Advanced Education administered a correspondence program, and community groups conducted a variety of adult education and vocationally oriented classes in the region.

The college is planning several changes. Eventually most of the teaching will be concentrated on the Booroona campus, the agriculture campus becoming the student residential area. In addition, the college occupies another site, South Campus, close to Wagga's main shopping centre and adjacent to two large teaching hospitals. The South Campus is the college's centre for teaching in nursing and radiography. In Albury/Wodonga, a secondary campus has developed from what was originally a much smaller study centre, and in Griffith the college operates a study centre.

Structure and Courses

The governing body at Riverina College of Advanced Education is the College Council, which is advised on academic matters by the College Board. The College Board consists of the principal, assistant principal (academic), the dean of the schools in the college, senior administrators, nominated academic staff and an elected student representative.

The schools of the college are agriculture, applied science, creative arts, business and liberal studies, and education. While various internal structures exist in these schools, each is responsible to its own school board, which reports to the College Board. The admissions committee, an assessment committee and ad hoc committees also report to the College Board, advising on specific matters.

The course offerings of the colleges are still clearly related to the major local needs. They include training in agriculture (grapes, wine making and general farming), science (basic science studies necessary for students in other schools and training for medical technology and nursing), education (teacher training and conversion courses for practising local teachers) and business studies (providing trained personnel for the commercial and industrial needs of the region).

EXTERNAL STUDIES

History

When Riverina College of Advanced Education began in 1972, the council decided that the college "would be as concerned with educating adults of the region who wanted its services as with serving the young men and women admitted to full-time study on campus" (Lemen, 1972). In March, 1972, study centres at Albury and Griffith commenced operations with 76 and 59 enrolments respectively.

As academic staff then were mostly unfamiliar with methods of distance teaching, they had to be trained in the methods of self-instructional and audio visual education. Instructors made substantial use of taped presentations to replace some on campus lectures.

The growth of enrolments and the demand for courses at the Albury/Wodonga study centre grew dramatically from the initial stages. In 1978, it became a campus of Riverina College and began offering some full-time courses in addition to part-time offerings. Additional full-time academic and administrative staff were appointed at the Albury campus. The total staff is currently 21.

Therefore, for all practical purposes the Albury/Wodonga campus has ceased to operate as a study centre as generally understood in the context of an external studies system. The Griffith study centre, however, has remained a small-scale centre, providing limited facilities and classes for students in the area.

Courses

Courses by correspondence are offered by all of the schools (except for the centre for the arts) in both degree and diploma courses.

Methods of External Teaching

The External Studies Unit at the main Wagga Wagga campus administers the courses for all students not attending the main campus on a regular basis.

The development of courses and study materials and the provision of lecturers for both internal and external students remains the responsibility of the individual schools of the college. In general, the same lecturers who instruct full-time students on campus also teach part-time and external students. They offer subjects that are similar in scope and content and involve the same assessment, but are adapted for home study. Lecturers travel from the main campus to Griffith and Albury for regular classes, providing instruction and supervision of individual study programs. The college has provided other occasional visiting lecture programs for students in outlying localities such as Deniliquin, Tumut, Nananderra, Temora and Cootamundra. These programs are mainly for local teachers.

Apart from the full-time and part-time programs available at the Wagga Wagga and Albury/Wodonga campuses, students can also study as off campus students using the Griffith Study Centre.

Students not studying on campus at either the Wagga or Albury/Wodonga campuses, work as external students. They use a system based largely on printed material. Some use is made of audio tapes. External students may make use of the campus or study centre facilities for some courses, and attendance may be required at residential and weekend schools on campus or at other locations. Students might also be required to complete practical laboratory work (for science and farming courses) and supervised field work (Handbook 1980, 1979).

For students studying part-time at Griffith, most study is carried out by use of self-instructional materials and methods. However, "students are 'required' to attend classes at the study centre in the same way that an on campus student is required to attend classes" (Fairhall, 1974). It was intended from the beginning that the study centres were not to provide a wide ranging contact and resource network for external students, but rather to act as 'mini colleges' where a regular teaching program would take place. Instruction would be provided by lecturers visiting from the main campus, and would serve only as a 'bonus' for 'correspondence' students in the area.

The Albury/Wodonga and Griffith study centres originally were intended to provide self-contained instructional facilities which would accommodate 50 to 60 students at a time. They were to provide a place for

- external students to report regularly for instruction presented by lecturers from main campus;
- individual study of printed and audio visual course materials;
- informal discussion of home study requirements with fellow students; and
- tutorials and examinations.

Centres were to be staffed week days and evenings by a person who could give course information and help students with the use of equipment. Course lecturers would make infrequent visits to Albury/Wodonga and Griffith, once every two or three weeks, and the bulk of instruction would consist of programmed, individual study assignments (Lemen, 1972).

As mentioned earlier, the Albury/Wodonga facility has been upgraded from a study centre to a secondary campus of the Riverina College.

RIVERINA COLLEGE STUDY CENTRE PROFILES

ALBURY/WODONGA STUDY CENTRE

The city of Wodonga has joined with Albury to form the Albury/Wodonga city complex, a combination promoted by decentralisation policies. The complex is situated on the Murray River, about 300 kilometres from Melbourne. Seven kilometres separate the two towns. Wodonga is on the southern, or Victorian, side of the river; Albury is on the New South Wales side.

In this overview, the cities are treated as separate entities, in an attempt to establish the distinct characteristics of each city.

TABLE SIX

Showing partial age breakdown for Wodonga population compared with state average.

Age Group	Wodonga	Vic.State Average
0 - 4	9.0	8.4
5 - 9	10.5	9.2
10 - 14	10.3	8.9
15 - 19	9.6	8.8
20 - 24	9.3	8.0
25 - 29	9.8	8.7

Wodonga, the smaller of the two cities, had about 15,700 residents in 1976. The 1971 figure was 13,000. This represents an increase of 20 per cent over the five year period.

Wodonga has a young population in comparison with the state average, with

58.5 per cent of its population under the age of 30. About 20 per cent of Wodonga's population fall into the teenage group (10-19 years of age), as shown in Table Six.

This young population implies the potential growth of the community, an objective sought by the Albury/Wodonga Development Corporation.

Primary industry in the district involves dairying and grazing. Over 2,200 people, (33 per cent of Wodonga's workforce), are involved in the secondary industries. These industries include a butter factory, a wool scour, a hosiery mill and timber mills. Over three per cent of Wodonga's workforce are involved in road transport, not a surprising figure considering that the Hume Highway (Melbourne-Sydney road link) runs through the city. Wodonga also has an extensive retail sales centre, with over seven per cent of the workforce employed as sales workers. The most striking feature of the workforce is that about 16 per cent of the employed residents are members of the armed forces, a figure 15 per cent higher than the state average.

Albury's population in 1976 reached about 33,000. In 1971 the figure of about 28,000. This represents a 15.9 per cent increase over the five year period. About 47 per cent of Albury's population are under the age of 25, over five per cent higher than the state average. This would suggest that Albury has a rapidly increasing population, as shown in Table Seven.

TABLE SEVEN

Showing partial age breakdown for Albury population compared with state average.

Age Group	Albury	Vic.State average
0 - 4	9.4	8.4
5 - 9	9.5	8.5
10 - 14	9.7	8.6
15 - 19	9.5	8.5
20 - 24	8.7	7.7

Albury is an important regional centre for a rich surrounding district. Its wool sales, wool and clothes factories, honey processing plant, abattoirs, wholesale agricultural establishments, goods shipping and professional services reflect the products and needs of the district.

Albury boasts an expanding and wide range of manufacturing activities. Over 4,500 of its residents are employed in these industries. This represents 32.7 per cent of Albury's employed population, a figure two per cent higher than the state average. The major secondary industry activity in Albury is the machinery/metal products industry, which claims 6.7 per cent of the workforce.

Almost a quarter of Albury's population are employed in the Wholesale and retail trade industry. About 10 per cent of the workforce are employed as sales workers in the large commercial centre of the city of Albury, a figure about two per cent higher than the state average.

Physical Aspects and Background of Study Centres

Study Centres were first established in Albury/Wodonga and Griffith in March, 1972. They were designed to meet the needs of part-time students in these areas. Since that time, the Albury/Wodonga campus (as it is now known) has moved to new premises, built to accommodate the expanding range of course offerings now available there. The branch campus is situated in the urban area of Albury, only a block away from the main street. The campus still caters primarily to on campus students, with 25 full-time and 425 part-time students. However, it also services about 50 off campus students in the region.

Full-time studies at this campus are offered by the School of Business and Liberal Studies in Accountancy and Administration. Part-time studies (with lectures normally held during the evening) are offered by the schools of Business and Liberal Studies and Education, while off campus (correspondence) courses are offered by the schools of Agriculture, Applied Science, Business and Liberal Studies and Education. The student may study by any mode or even by mixed modes. The staff encourage students to use the face-to-face mode of teaching if they reside within commuting distance of the branch campus, a distance of about 60 kilometres, according to the director.

The Albury/Wodonga campus is a substantial building of modern design and decor. It provides seven lecture/tutorial rooms, a library, a laboratory, a large staff/student common room, eight staff offices, clerical offices, audio visual facilities, a room with four audio carrels, and computer facilities. Parking facilities for cars are located at the rear of the building.

By the start of the 1981 academic year it is expected that the administrative and academic staff offices will be relocated in an older building situated on the main street of Albury. The present building will be reserved for teaching and library purposes.

The campus is open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. from Monday to Thursday during teaching weeks and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Fridays and during non-teaching periods. Pilot studies have revealed no consistent demands from Riverina students for regular weekend opening.

Staffing

The branch campus employs 21 staff; a director, eight full-time academic staff, three part-time academic staff, one full-time library officer, a half-time library/clerical assistant, a full-time typist, two full-time clerks/receptionists, one half-time clerical assistant, two casual clerical assistants on call and a half-time male general assistant.

The opening times of the branch campus demand a "one and half" shift roster. The clerical and library staff, therefore, work two evenings a week, starting work at 2 p.m. The casual clerical assistants are needed to 'plug gaps' in the rosters caused by sickness and holidays. This work experience gives them a systematic introduction to the system. The general assistant is basically an 'odd jobs' man. Contract cleaners clean the campus three times a week between 10 p.m. and 9 a.m. Clerical and typing staff and the general assistant are employed directly by the branch campus, and are not a part of the Wagga Wagga establishment.

The three part-time staff normally teach just one subject and/or conduct relevant tutorials. The eight full-time academic staff are employed by the relevant schools at the Wagga campus. Two staff are employed by the School of Education; both teach and supervise practical teaching experience in the local schools. Five of the staff belong to the School of Business and Liberal Studies. They include a liberal studies lecturer (history); lecturers in accountancy, administration and economics; and a tutor in administration and economics. There is also one full-time computing lecturer, who is part of the Centre of Computing Studies.

The bulk of the teaching load at the campus is in first year subjects, so the aim of academic staffing arrangements at the campus is to attain self-sufficiency in providing for students at the first year level. At present, academic staff from Wagga travel to the campus regularly.

Library

The local campus has a modest (but in study centre terms, relatively large) library which is used extensively by on campus students. In addition to a permanent collection, core books for courses are sent to the library every semester from the Wagga library. There are still complaints, however, about the insufficient numbers of books. In recent times there has been greater public usage of the library, especially among professionals like accountants, lawyers and school teachers.

Functioning: Internal Students

The Albury/Wodonga branch campus is a teaching campus with regular lectures and tutorials. The campus is geared mainly towards part-time students. This is reflected in the fact that there are 425 part-time students and only 25 full-time students on campus. All on campus students are enrolled at the branch campus, but official student records are housed at the main campus.

The emphasis is on part-time students because the campus cannot offer full-time students a complete student lifestyle, even though there is a local student association. At present, an Albury/Wodonga full-time students can complete a course over a three year period, only by studying in a mixed mode, that is, a combination of day classes, part-time evening studies and occasionally off campus studies.

Twice a year students are invited to a counselling night where arrangements are made for them to buy prescribed texts, talk to lecturers and discuss their courses. Students are invited by letter and respond by making an appointment.

Functioning: External Students

The campus acts as an advice centre to prospective off campus students, and is the place of initial contact. After this contact branch campus staff have little further contact with the students. All external courses are handled directly from Wagga. External students are not assigned to study centres, but are informed of their existence. The branch campus does not take any initiative with external students. It is estimated that about 50 Riverina off campus students live in the Albury/ Wodonga region.

The branch campus does, however, provide services to external students when requested It is a tutorial centre and an examination centre. The initiative for tutorials comes from Wagga, with the local campus making the physical arrangements.

The campus offers external students an alternative to external study by giving them the opportunity to study some subjects internally. Furthermore, they offer 'enriched' external courses, with schools or workshops at the beginning, middle and towards the end of the semester. The Albury/Wodonga Centre also can provide external students with opportunities for counselling.

The library services at the campus are at the disposal of external students, even though library books are mailed to students from Wagga on request. The local campus runs its own courier service, which allows off campus students to send assignments to Wagga free of charge.

Relations with the Wagga Wagga Campus

The courier service is provided by Wagga lecturers who travel down to Albury/Wodonga for evening lectures. They bring correspondence from the mail room at the Wagga campus and return with the Albury/Wodonga mail. This system only works when there is a car "down" for night lectures. This excludes Friday nights and the non-teaching periods of the year. If no other arrangements are possible commercial transport or Australia Post are used. Because of these limitations, the Albury/Wodonga campus feels the problem of isolation.

There are no special funds allocated to the Riverina College for running a second campus. The costs of the Albury/Wodonga Centre come out of the Wagga grant. The branch campus controls a relatively small amount of money, some $10,000 a year in all.

The branch campus does not have the status of a school of the Riverina College, nor is it a teaching centre such as the Information Resources Centre. It is seen as a non-teaching centre, as are the college winery and the college farms. This situation arises because the academic staff belong to their relevant schools. The director of the branch campus is on the Academic Board and is a member of the Principal's Planning Committee. This informal committee includes the principal, the assistant principal, the deans, the bursar, the registrar and selected directors. Even more importantly, the director of the branch campus is regarded as part of the principal's office and therefore has ready access to the principal. This produces the feeling amongst some staff at Wagga that the branch campus may be in a favoured position.

A source of tension between Wagga and the Albury/Wodonga campus is the Albury/Wodonga community's concern for higher education facilities. It is not expected that an autonomous college of advanced education could be established in Albury/Wodonga within the foreseeable future. The staff of Riverina College at Wagga are concerned that the development of alternative higher education facilities in Albury/Wodonga would be at the expense of Riverina enrolments. Some Wagga staff are even concerned at the college's own Albury campus expanding: such expansions may affect enrolments at Wagga. The director of the centre, therefore, finds himself in a dilemma: the local community desires maximum expansion, while Wagga is reluctant to see such growth if it threatens the main campus in any way.

Schools at the Wagga campus sometimes think the financial needs of the Albury/Wodonga campus are being met at their expense. Additional resources and funding for Albury/Wodonga may mean less for their own operations. There is some suggestion also that staff at the main campus view the needs in Albury/Wodonga from a Wagga perspective, without always having a real feel for local needs. For instance, the offering of full-time studies was an adventurous decision which created as many problems as it resolved. Much of the director's time seems to be spent remedying problems that might have been avoided if Wagga staff were more sensitive to the Albury/Wodonga situation.

Finally, the staff and students at Albury/Wodonga feel they do not get a fair allocation of resources, especially with respect of library facilities and that in matters of staff promotion they are disadvantaged by being at a distance from the main campus.

GRIFFITH STUDY CENTRE

The Griffith Study Centre provides regular classes and facilities for part-time and correspondence students. It also provides a venue for a variety of continuing education programs in the area. These programs come under the responsibility of the Division of Regional Services at the main campus. They are organised, however, by the education officer at the Griffith centre. Courses have included classes for the retired, ethnic communities, and isolated women, and instruction on the care of handicapped children. Other classes meet needs of local farming and business groups.

The Griffith Centre lies in the Murrumbidgee irrigation area, about 6[illegible] kilometres (by rail) south west of Sydney. No figures are available for Griffith, therefore, figures are for the Shire of Leeton. They should be considered in this light.

In 1976 the shire had a population of 11,287, a decrease of 0.66 per cent from the figure of 11,359 in 1971. The shire has an above-average birth rate when compared to the state average. It is a young area: 43 per cent of Leeton's population is under the age of 20: only 35 per cent of the state's population are under this age.

All types of fruit, grapes, vegetables, wheat, rice and tobacco are grown here. Over 1,000 people, 23.2 per cent of the workforce, are classified as farmers, a figure 17 per cent higher than the state average. Secondary industry in this region includes packaging of fruit and vegetables, production of fruit juice, wine making, rice production, alcohol distillation and light engineering. Over 1,180 of the workforce are employed in these industries - about 27 per cent of the labour pool. This is three per cent less than the state average.

History.

The Griffith Study Centre was established in 1972, at the same time as the Albury Study Centre. It was expected that these centres would provide essentially the same services for students of the Riverina College who were remote from the main campus. The intervening period, however, has seen very great differences in the development of the two centres. At the Albury Centre the provision of tertiary education has increased to the extent that the centre has recently been designated as a secondary "campus" and concentrates primarily on part-time studies. In Griffith, after a fairly strong initial demand for tertiary education, enrolments decreased and in recent years have stabilized at a relatively low level. At the same time the demand for continuing education has grown more rapidly in comparison with Albury and Wagga Wagga.

A number of factors seem to have been important in the divergent development of the two study centres -

- population differences, assuming a fairly fixed proportion of the population will be interested in tertiary study (i.e. Albury/Wodonga, 52,000; Griffith 13,000);
- in Griffith almost half of the population is of Italian origin and it seems that this group in the community has traditionally made little demand on tertiary education; and
- the economy of Griffith is principally based on primary industry (which has traditionally provided less demand for tertiary education) while government decentralization policies in relation to Albury/Wodonga have attracted the growth of secondary and decentralized administration and management in both the public and private sectors (which have traditionslly made greater demands on tertiary education).

The early demand for tertiary education at the Griffith Study Centre was principally based upon the need, at that time, for the upgrading of the qualifications of local teachers and a desire of many people in the local business community for tertiary level studies in accountancy and administration. These business studies had not previously been easily accessible for local people who were also committed to full-time employment. "Enriched" correspondence courses were offered at the Griffith Centre in teacher conversion courses, accounting and administration from 1972. These were terminated in 1977. Many of these vocationally-motivated needs were largely fulfilled in the first few years of the study centre's operation, and the need for tertiary courses has since declined. Some demand for tertiary education in the region has remained but is less vocationally motivated. Local women now represent the majority of students in the area. "Enriched" correspondence courses in sociology and psychology as part of a B.A. (liberal studies) were first offered at the Griffith Centre in 1979 and have been continued in 1980. While the demand for tertiary education in the Griffith area has not been as great as expected, the demand for continuing education has grown unexpectedly. This form of education seems to be most relevant to the educational needs of adults in the area. The education officer in the centre considers that continuing education constitutes 90 to 95 per cent of her workload. In 1979, 10 per cent of the population of Griffith had enrolled in continuing education courses at the study centre.

Apart from the support services provided for local tertiary correspondence students, the centre has been used regularly for

- daily after school family programs;
- once a week literacy/numeracy programs;
- classes for retired and handicapped people;
- a craft and homemaker course for Aboriginal women; and
- classes for women in the local Women's Refuge.

In addition the centre is used regularly for -

- meetings of community groups;
- hearing tests for deaf children;
- use of audio-visual facilities by local community groups;
- displays, festivals and social events; and

- special classes, lectures and seminars for local farming and business groups.

Facilities and Physical Aspects

The Griffith Study Centre is housed in a rather solid 50-year-old building virtually in the middle of the main street of Griffith. The building has been given rent-free by the local council for the College to use for a study centre. The building is clearly signposted and apparently well known by local people. It has a great advantage in being situated beside the local shire library. The building has three large teaching/activity/meeting rooms, one of which is set up more for formal teaching with desks, chairs and blackboards. The others are large open, multipurpose areas. There is also a waiting area adjacent to a small office used by the education officer and a typist/clerk. A small library, storerooms, refreshment area, a large kitchen and toilets complete the facility. The Centre has no special parking facilities, but this does not seem to be a problem.

Both staff and students at the centre have encouraged a "shop front" approach to education characterised by flexibility of facilities and programs and a non-threatening environment. The present building seems to suit these needs well. The centre is open generally from 9 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. most days of the week, apart from the "quiet" mid-winter season (June to August). It seems the flexible hours suit most students and can be easily modified.

Staffing

The College employs one full-time education officer (who co-ordinates and supervises the activities), one full-time typist/clerk and one part-time cleaner at the Griffith Study Centre.

In addition over 50 local people are employed for part-time or casual tutoring in continuing education classes. Also, lecturers visit the centre from the Wagga Wagga campus fortnightly for classes with the tertiary correspondence students.

The present education officer took up her position in 1977 after the major shift in emphasis of the study centre towards continuing education. She regards her principal responsibilities as

- organiser of the tertiary Study Centre, "trouble-shooting" problems, providing course advice and organising services for the students;
- organising the continuing education courses provided by the study centre;
- practical teacher supervision, liaison and organisation; and as a
- part-time lecturer in law with Riverina correspondence courses (including marking of assignments and assisting in provision of residential schools at the main campus).

Costs

The building is provided "rent free" by the local council and the College pays all maintenance costs, as well as the ongoing costs of the programs conducted and the salaries of all staff. The continuing education programs are apparently self-supporting in that their total costs are exceeded by the income from them. This income is usually in the form of membership or course fees. While some programs are not self-sufficient, the income from others compensates. It is proposed to use the small profit from the continuing education programs to improve facilities and equipment.

Use of the Centre

The Riverina College makes a distinction between part-time, correspondence, and "enriched" correspondence studies. Apparently these distinctions are not understood by everyone. The education officer and students referred to some students as "part-time", while lecturers at the Wagga Wagga campus said that there were no part-time students at Griffith, only "enriched correspondence" and correspondence students. The following clarification is based on explanations given by lecturing staff at Wagga Wagga.

Part-time students attend regular weekly classes "on campus" and may receive the "correspondence" study materials at the lecturers' instigation but are not supplied with these materials automatically.

Correspondence students attend no regular classes either "on campus" or at study centres. They are automatically sent materials and are required to attend residential schools at the Wagga Wagga campus during the semester.

"Enriched" correspondence students automatically receive study materials and work within the "off campus" system; however, they also attend fortnightly or monthly classes at the study centre and are not required to attend residential schools at the main campus.

By definition there are no part-time students at Griffith since there are no regular weekly classes.

The only "enriched" correspondence course presently available at the Griffith Study Centre is a B.A. (liberal studies) in Sociology and psychology. In sociology lecturers come to the study centre to meet with students on a monthly basis; psychology lecturers come fortnightly. These meetings often include students taking subjects at various levels, from introductory to more advanced. The formality of the lecture depends upon the lecturer's particular style. They vary from a general discussion/tutorial style to more formal lectures. There are approximately 15 students taking these "enriched correspondence courses at Griffith, and the lecturers' visits typically attract between six and twelve students.

In addition to those studying by "enriched" correspondence there are also about 30 students in the area studying entirely by the correspondence mode. Many of these students have fairly regular contact with the education officer at the centre.

The geographic distribution of students attached to the Griffith Study Centre extends from Narrandera, 100 kilometres to the east, to Hillston, 110 kilometres to the west.

The study centre services correspondence students by providing

- contact with the education officer for advice and assistance for the usual difficulties faced by students (i.e. course information, study problems and other difficulties affecting study);
- examination supervision in some of the subjects taken by correspondence students. (At least half of the subjects are assessed entirely by assignments and essays);
- Library services. The study centre houses a small collection of its own library books as well as sets of subject references loaned from the main library at the Wagga Wagga campus and a set of the lecturer's own reference books. In addition, many of the students interviewed found the shire library next door very convenient and useful for reference material (several of the shire library staff are also Riverina external students);
- Audio-visual equipment. The study centre library has a substantial collection of language tapes and other course material on audio cassettes. There are also tape players, slide and film projectors, and black and white video tape recorders (VTR). If required a colour VTR unit is borrowed from the Vocational Guidance Centre in Griffith. Although not the most modern the audio-visual equipment and other materials seem adequate as the use of non printed materials is fairly minimal for most subjects.
- Practice teaching supervision for student teachers.

This is provided by the study centre for students who live in the Griffith area.

- Visiting Lecturers as indicated previously.
- Private Study. The Griffith Study Centre is occasionally used by some students for private study (during the week and at weekends), although this seems not to be typical.

As well as the formal support services for students provided by the study centre, the education officer has provided other assistance. In 1979 some student self-help study groups were tried but did not seem to work satisfactorily. The students had not been prepared for these and seemed to have difficulty in using these meetings effectively. It appeared that students needed to be taught how to run discussion groups effectively. At present the education officer has instituted an informal system whereby students who are having difficulty with a subject are put in contact with other students who have previously successfully studied the subject.

Overall, however, there is a very strong sense of community among the students who seem to relate strongly to the Griffith Study Centre. It would appear that the informal networks within this "community" are at least as strong a support for students as the formal services.

As well as Riverina correspondence students, local external students from other institutions (i.e. Mitchell, Armidale, New England, Newcastle) also make use of the facilities and resources, although there are no formal links with these other institutions.

Relationship with the Main Campus

Study Materials: correspondence students are provided with regular mail packages of study materials from the Wagga Wagga campus. Students regard the quality of the materials as generally adequate, but there appears to be some difficulties with material arriving late although this was confined to only a few courses or mailings. All packages include a return mail 'problems sheet' for students to ask questions or express difficulties to lecturers at the main campus. These seemed to be used sparingly by students mainly to express complaints. In some subject packages a list of enrolled students in the region was included in the first package of the semester. While this seems a valuable way of encouraging students to contact each other, it seems not to be supplied in all subjects and did not seem to be used by many students at Griffith, perhaps because there were few, if any, other students taking the subject who were easily accessible.

A booklist was often included in the first subject package but students felt these were needed several weeks earlier in order to avoid delays in securing textbooks.

Assignments: Students generally found the feedback obtained from comments on marked, returned assignments quite valuable. There were some instances of long delays in return of assignments. In some cases the final assignments were not returned until after the final examination.

Residential Schools at the main campus were considered by students to be useful. The usual difficulties faced by external students made these schools inconvenient for some, however.

Contact with lecturers from the main campus. It seems that only about a third of the correspondence students at Griffith have regular contact with lecturers through study centre visits. There seems to be some resentment among lecturers required to visitbecause these responsibilities are simply added to their on-campus responsibilities without any additional recompense. In addition some lecturers doubt the real justification for these visits when they serve only a small group of students. However, there is considerable variation in the views of staff on such issues.

Very few students contact main campus lecturers by telephone, partly because of inconvenience, difficulties in accessibility, and cost. Those who do so seem to be satisfied with the advice and information they receive.

Library Services. Correspondence students at Griffith can obtain reference books from the Wagga Wagga library. Many students, however, commented that they could often obtain books faster by interlibrary loans through the shire library, especially for books that could not be obtained through the various library systems available. Nonetheless, delays in securing books could be very substantial and were a major source of frustration for correspondence students at Griffith.

Organisational Relationships. The Griffith Study Centre operations are the responsibility of the Director of Community and Student Affairs at Wagga. The education officer at the study centre is given a small yearly budget for running the centre. The main campus decides the allocations, however, while the education officer decides how the money will be used in each of the areas.

There seems to be good communication between the education officer and the responsible department at the main campus, but the officer feels that with the exception of some visiting lecturers, many of the academic staff at the college know little about the study centre. Indeed, there seems to be some feeling among staff at the Wagga Wagga campus that the concentration on continuing education courses at Griffith is only marginally relevant to a College of Advanced Education. There is also some feeling that provision of "enriched" correspondence at the study centre is only marginally justified, and that correspondence studies are educationally inferior to on-campus studies.

Other matters of concern to academic staff at the main campus include:

. lack of adequate planning of the development of correspondence studies;

- lack of a separate budgetary commitment for the external studies system, study centres and other support services for correspondence students; and
- lack of adequate methods, techniques and processes of development for correspondence study materials.

Unlike the Albury campus, the Griffith study centre plays virtually no part in student administration and enrolments. Students receive enrolment forms from Wagga Wagga and usually return them by post, although they can leave them at the study centre to be sent on to the college. Isolation is not seen as a particular problem by the education officer; in fact, she sees it as having some advantages in terms of flexibility and autonomy.

VICTORIAN TAFE OFF CAMPUS NETWORK

Institutional Background

The Victorian TAFE Off Campus Network (VTOCN) is a system of 15 study centres in technical schools and colleges throughout Victoria. Begun in 1976, it is co-ordinated by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology's School of External Studies, but the head of the network also has a reporting responsibility to the Director of Technical Education through the External Studies Advisory Committee (ESAC), which recommends to the Director on policy.

At present, there are 8,300 students, most of them over 21, studying through the VTOCN system. The network offers some 42 courses.

History

The Kangan Report in 1975 envisaged a major increase in opportunity and resources at the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) level. Prior to this report the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Technical College had considered expanding its external studies program. In this system TAFE external students were enrolled in a highly centralised external studies program located at the RMIT campus in Melbourne.

In 1974 RMIT was given responsibility for external studies at the technical level within Victoria. Recognising the implications of the Kangan Report, RMIT acknowledged that a consortium of TAFE colleges should be developed throughout the state believing that a centralised system disadvantaged students who lived at a distance. In 1975, in response to an RMIT sub-committee report, a decentralised system called the Victoria TAFE Off Campus Network (VTOCN) was established. Study centres were set up at selected technical schools and technical colleges.

RMIT: An Introduction:

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology is one of the largest technical and advanced education institutions in Australia, and by far the largest in Victoria. The school is composed of two colleges. The Technical College offers technical, trade access and creative leisure courses. The Advanced College provides tertiary courses as part of what was once the Victoria Institute of Colleges.

The main campus is located in the central city area of Melbourne. Although the majority of the campus is contained within one block, other buildings are spread throughout the adjacent city area. RMIT has no residential facilities.

RMIT developed from the Working Men's College founded in 1887 by the Hon. Francis Ormond. The school was established to allow working men the opportunity to improve their education. While the present institute has developed far beyond its limited origins,it still maintains many of its original philosophies and aspirations in the strong vocational emphasis of its current range of post-secondary programs.

The co-ordinating authority of the network is accommodated by RMIT.

External Studies at RMIT

History

RMIT was one of the first organisations in Australia to enter the field of post-secondary external teaching. The correspondence School was founded in 1919 as a direct response to the educational and vocational needs of returning World War I service-men. In the first year, 12 courses were offered, including general education, commercial, commercial training, a chauffeur's and eight trade courses.

The school grew rapidly, but when the Repatriation Department took over the education of ex-servicemen in 1921 and the 1930's depression hit, growth ceased, and a school continued on a very limited basis. At one stage during this period, the staff of the school consisted of only one typist. A re-organisation of the school was undertaken in 1939 and again in 1942. A flood of enrolments from ex-servicemen brought about a new period of rapid growth. Shortly after the end of World War II (1946), there was a great expansion in commercial subjects. Ten subjects leading to Bankers Institute examinations became available. More unusual courses included freelance journalism, elementary Japanese, breadbaking, foremanship and dressmaking.

By 1948 the school offered 210 subjects. Some 33,237 students had been enrolled at one time or another in its courses. As part of the Colombo Plan, the school started the Correspondence Training Scheme in 1955. Through the mid 1950's expansion of subjects and enrolments continued, and the school began spelling out a philosophy of comparability and integration with internal courses. According to W.F. Chappell -

> "for the greater part, correspondence courses are conducted by members of the college staff engaged in day and evening class instruction in the same subjects. The matter of such courses is practically the same as that which comprises class notes. Revision of the latter part is accompanied by revision of the former, so that correspondence students, no less than day and evening students, are kept abreast of latest developments."
>
> (Chappell, 1979).

In 1968 a fairly radical re-evaluation and rationalisation of the School of External Studies occurred. Its purpose was to bring the school closer into line with the rest of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and its new, centralised administration.

There were two major difficulties. One was the problem of providing external study facilities at both tertiary and sub-tertiary levels through the one department. Secondly, there was a proliferation of individual subjects rather than integrated courses.

The Internal Committee of Enquiry also recommended:

. the division must show some profit and be entirely financed from student fees;

- an External Studies Advisory Board be set up to review recommendation on new external courses, and rationalise or cancel, if necessary, existing courses; and
- that an adequate library service be provided for external students.

By 1973 there were 203 tutors and writers employed by the school; 38 per cent were full-time teaching staff of the institute. The school had developed the nucleus of a lending library for external students. Seminars for external students were made available at RMIT or through staff visits to country centres.

In the Advanced College sector five complete diploma courses and 29 subjects became available externally. Staffing included three academics, four technical officers and 42 administrators.

In the Technical College nine complete courses were available. They included technical and managerial courses, 21 Higher School Certificate subjects, and 25 subjects in the Bankers Institute Certificate.

The total student enrolment in 1973 was 6,633. At this time, principally due to the Colombo Plan, the school provided material for students in Asia and the Pacific, the North and South Americas, Africa, the United States and Europe.

Among recent developments perhaps the most significant occurred in 1975 when an agreement between RMIT and the Education Department was concluded through which RMIT became the sole Victorian co-ordinating authority for all external TAFE studies. This new venture, the Victorian TAFE Off Campus Network (VTOCN) began operating in 1975 through the School of External Studies at RMIT and a network of study centres numbering 15 by 1978. Technical Schools and Colleges served as study centres each of which had its own co-ordinator. The primary role of the School of External Studies is to prepare and print all external studies teaching material and to co-ordinate the network.

The advanced college sector of the external study system does not have any separate study centre system. However, intending advanced education external students may use VTOCN centres to obtain information about study opportunities. It would be rare for an enrolled advanced education student to use the study centre.

The School of External Studies is responsible for both TAFE external studies and advance college external studies. The Technical College within RMIT is responsible for the study centre which services external TAFE students. Among other changes occurring, greater emphasis is being placed on full courses rather than individual subjects. There is also greater sophistication in the production of study materials. (It is of interest to note that up until the mid 1960's the duplicator was the major method of producing study materials).

For the most part the remainder of this review is concerned only with TAFE off campus students as the study centre network is the major part of interest.

Students

Initially all TAFE off campus students were regarded as RMIT students although they were studying through a local study centre. Since that time, TAFE off campus students at a study centre now enrol in the local college and are counted as students of the local colleges. Simiarly, RMIT Technical College currently has some 1,400 TAFE off campus students enrolled through its study centre.

Approximately 70 per cent of network external students live within the metropolitan Melbourne area. Since these students have a choice between the two modes, this would seem to represent a preference for off campus rather than part-time on campus study. However, increasing numbers of students are studying by mixed mode, that is taking some courses off campus and some on campus. Every TAFE off campus student in Victoria is linked to one of the study centres. Interstate or overseas students are enrolled through the RMIT Technical College study centre.

Courses

The following types of courses were offered in 1979 at the Technical College of RMIT under the TAFE system. Many of the subjects are available on a part-time or external basis, but some of the more specific courses are principally taken as short-term, full-time courses for workers in industry.

Preparatory programs are designed to assist those who have left school before completing the qualifications required for entry to post-secondary courses, such as apprenticeships and technician certificates.

Technician courses incorporate basic vocational training and an extension of the specialised applications of this training. They usually include studies in mathematics, science and English to form five (year 11 level).

Basic vocational courses include apprenticeship programs and trade courses. The college offers 34 such programs.

Post apprenticeship programs number 13. They extend specialised applications of training provided in the basic vocational courses.

Special purpose vocational courses are offered in highly specialised or restricted areas requested by and servicing particular industries or firms. 83 such courses were offered in these specialised areas.

Technical orientation courses are programs designed to prepare students for vocationally and technologically oriented courses. They enable the successful students to proceed, after one year, to technical courses at post-secondary level. Generally the core subjects are offered at form five, year 11 level, and are essentially bridging programs. Technical orientation courses are offered in the areas of mechanical/materials and electrical/electronic.

Middle level vocational courses are designed to train immediate support personnel for professional officers and higher level management. The courses also train small operators who need to be proficient in a variety of technical or business tasks as well as in small-scale management decision making. Thirty-six middle level courses are available at the Technical College.

Tertiary orientation courses are flexible programs which prepare students for tertiary study. Subjects are taught at Form six, year 12 level. Some are specifically designed to satisfy tertiary course preprequisites. These, therefore, provide an alternative to HSC courses. 12 TOP subjects are available.

Methods of External Teaching

While the present external studies system at RMIT has gone a long way beyond its original simple correspondence system, by far the most important method of communicating teaching material remains the printed word. Not only have production and presentation methods become more sophisticated with the use of educational technology, (e.g. audio visual media such as audio tapes, slides and transparencies), but so has the writing and revision of course materials. Courses offered externally are also offered internally. Therefore the responsibility for curriculum design, development and revision is essentially that of the academic department. The School of External Studies is principally involved in instructional design and delivery. There are some differences between the sectors, however, in the system of curriculum design. The principal difference is that in the Advanced College sector all writers are staff of the relevant academic department, while in the TAFE sector writers are drawn from any Technical College and sometimes from industry and are specifically contracted to write a course or part of a course.

Rather than only duplicated lecture notes, learning packages are constructed including other media to supplement written material. Local tutorial groups at study centres provide teacher-student and student-student contact; there is also a telephone system whereby students may contact tutors for advice and assistance. Network tutors may visit local study centres for special seminars. Weekend residential seminars/ laboratory sessions are provided either at regional colleges or at RMIT itself. Finally, there is counselling for students, particularly at enrolment time, carried out by the local study centre co-ordinator or by contact with the co-ordinating authority. Whether all of this represents quite the advance one imagines is open to conjecture. From a document produced by the Melbourne Technical School in 1919 there is this paragraph on instruction by correspondence:

> The ordinary text-book is of no value for correspondence tuition or, indeed, for any study without the assistance of a teacher. The Correspondence Instruction of the M.T.C.S. is so written as to render any additional oral instruction, comment, or explanation unnecessary: the student's questions are answered before being asked; the Instruction Papers contain both Teaching and Teacher. In the few cases in which a difficulty or a question arises which the student finds himself unable to solve, he is encouraged to write fully to his Instructor, who sends a written reply, precise and comprehensive, and which can be retained for future reference.
>
> (Chappell, 1979).

THE VTOCN SYSTEM

A key feature of the TAFE Off Campus network in Victoria is not only that it offers educational opportunities to people irrespective of their place of residence, but that it provides local contact and support through the network centres.

Organisational Aspects

The co-ordinating authority of the VTOCN takes the view that learning does not necessarily have to be of the formal, face-to-face type. In fact, the Mills Report (1978) suggests tht home-based study, together with a local study centre providing a tutor and the occasional group sessions, may be a more effective form of learning for the adult student.

Contrary to a very large central organisation which may become administratively inflexible and excessively bureaucratic, VTOCN's state-wide system of off campus studies maintains flexibility and facilitates innovation.

In summary, RMIT has been the VTOCN co-ordinating body since its inception. The 15 participating technical colleges and schools throughout the state distribute centrally produced learning materials and provide contact for local students. The co-ordinating body, RMIT, maintains contact with study centres, produces study materials and trains and supervises network staff.

The relationship of the components of the VTOCN are summarised in Figure Four.

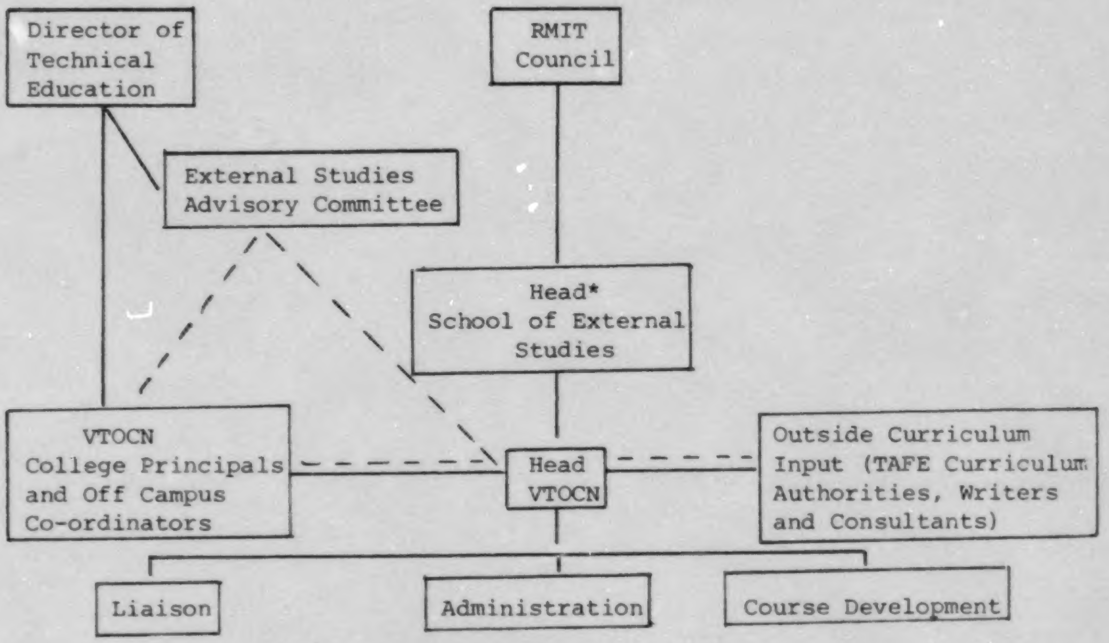
Director of Technical Education
RMIT Council
External Studies Advisory Committee
Head* School of External Studies
VTOCN College Principals and Off Campus Co-ordinators
Head VTOCN
Outside Curriculum Input (TAFE Curriculum Authorities, Writers and Consultants)
Liaison
Administration
Course Development

FIGURE THREE

Showing organisational relationships in the TAFE off campus studies system.

* who reports through the Assistant Director (Educational Services) to the Director of RMIT who in turn, reports to Council.

The VTOCN co-ordinating authority has direct responsibility for TAFE off campus programs. Its tasks are:

1. The development of TAFE courses/subjects and study materials. This is done in close consultation with the TAFE curriculum authorities and the Director of Technical Education's Advisory Committee on External Studies. The School provides expertise in the off-campus mode and production facilities, but brings in outside writers and consultants on a contractural basis to provide the general educational and content expertise necessary for individual subjects.
2. Co-ordination of the delivery system. In this capacity the TAFE Sector of the RMIT School of External Studies is responsible for:
    - preparation of submissions and negotiations requesting funds and staff establishment for the VTOCN;
    - The monitoring and reporting on VTOCN income and expenditure;
    - The co-ordination of enrolment quotas and procedures;
    - The monitoring and co-ordination of tutoring, seminars and workshops across the VTOCN;
    - The monitoring, co-ordination, and, where necessary, the preparation, of examinations across the VTOCN;
    - General publicity for the VTOCN;
    - Employment of Network tutors. These are used to look after students from a number, or maybe all, of the off campus centres where local tutors are not available. In the first year of offering a subject, the VTOCN attempts to employ the writers of the materials as Network tutors.

(General Information, 1980: 4).

Off Campus Centres

There are Off-Campus Centres located at fifteen TAFE Colleges/Schools throughout Victoria. Students enrol for off campus study through the Centre most convenient to them whether by value of where they live or where they work and thus become students of that College or School.

Each Off Campus Centre is staffed by an Off Campus Co-ordinator, at Senior Teacher Level, and varying numbers of clerical support staff.

The Off-Campus Centre is responsible for enrolling each student, supplying his or her study materials, handling the assignment traffic, employing local tutors, monitoring the progress of each student through his or her course of study and organising local workshops, seminars and other supports for the students.

(General Information, 1980: 5).

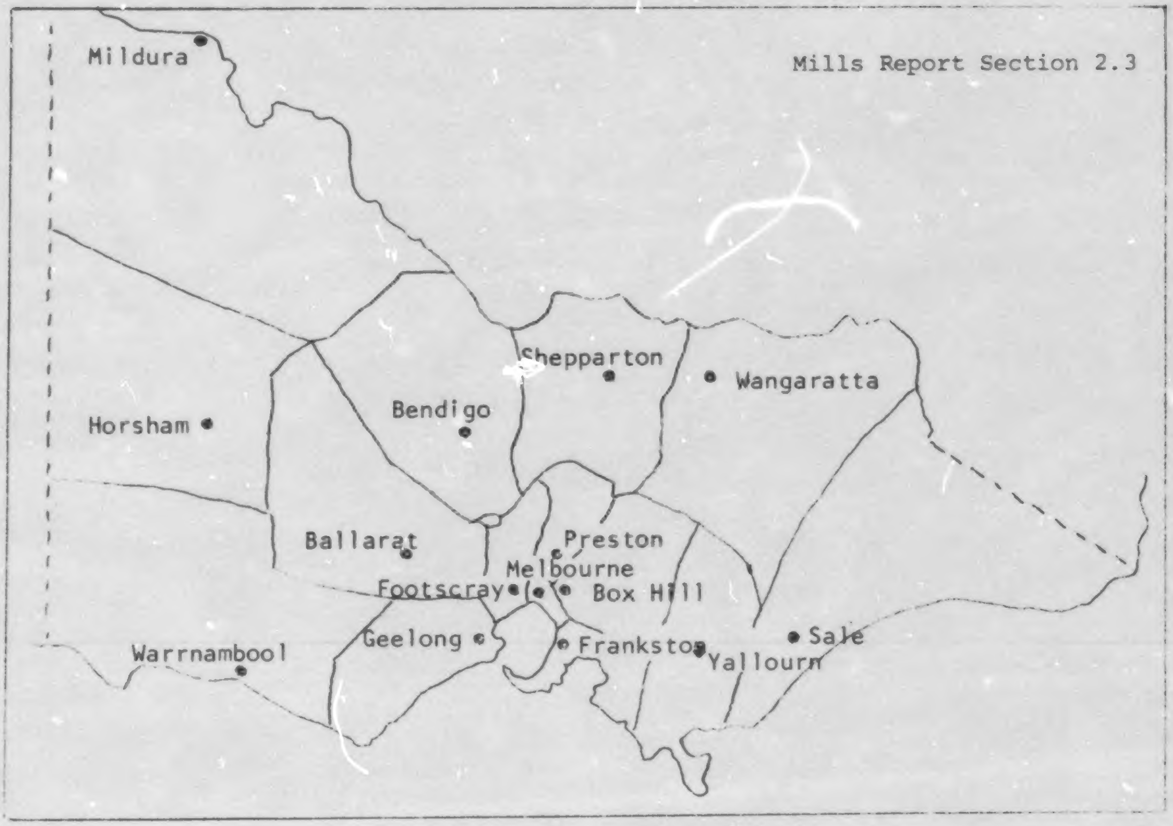
Mildura
Mills Report Section 2.3
Shepparton
Wangaratta
Horsham
Bendigo
Ballarat
Preston
Melbourne
Footscray
Box Hill
Geelong
Frankston
Sale
Yallourn
Warrnambool

FIGURE FOUR

Showing location of the VTOCN Off Campus Centres.

The local off campus study centre should:

- make a wide range of learning resources accessible to students;
- provide opportunity for student-student and student-tutor contact;
- provide venues for meetings of students;
- be a source of information and advice to current and intending students; and
- provide physical facilities for study, when necessary.

Mills believes that the co-ordinator is the key to the decentralised system. He writes:

> His relationship with students is critical. A local person to whom the student can turn with confidence is in my view a vital component of a distance teaching system and intuitively one feels such a person has a considerable effect on student performance or lack of it.
>
> (Mills, 1978).

The local off campus co-ordinator has several functions. He or she must:

- survey the needs for off campus study in his region (100 kilometre radius);
- assist the principal in organising off campus programs to satisfy these needs;
- negotiate with the co-ordinating authority for support in satisfying these needs;
- evaluate off campus programs; and
- publicise the programs.

Off campus tutors in this system are seen as the off campus version of the on campus teacher.

Broadly the functions of a tutor are of two kinds: the assessment of assignments and the conduct of tutorial sessions. A tutor may be engaged to do either one of these or both. Tutors may be of two kinds, local or network. The relationship between function and type of tutor is shown by a 2x2 matrix.

		Tutor	
		Local	Network
Function	Assessment		
	Tutorials		

The VTOCN is a co-operative arrangement which confers substantial benefits on off campus students. There are signs, however, of emerging strains and difficulties in the organisation.

PROFILES OF SELECTED OFF CAMPUS CENTRES

GORDON OFF CAMPUS CENTRE

The VTOCN off campus centre in Geelong was established at the Gordon Technical College in 1975, at the beginning of the development of the VTOCN system. Its first year of operation was 1976 when the centre's office was located on the main campus of the Gordon Technical College and the office staff consisted of one full-time co-ordinator. A full-time clerical assistant was added to the staff and temporary additional support staff were provided particularly during enrolment periods.

Geelong is the second largest city in Victoria. It is situated on Corio Bay, about 75 kilometres southwest of Melbourne. It is accessible from Melbourne by both rail and highway.

Geelong is an important and expanding commercial centre servicing the pastoral and agricultural areas of the west and northwest. Early Geelong was built upon wool and wheat clearances to export markets through its ports. Geelong is still important to these areas because of its railway and port facilities. In more recent years the port has expanded on the basis of crude petroleum import and refined petroleum exports.

Geelong's proximity to Melbourne, with which it forms a part of Port Phillip Bay, has ensured its receiving a number of industries which might otherwise have been located in the capital. In recent years, the immediate hinterland has become important and the city has been recognised for its value as a suitable site for processing and fabrication industries. Ford, Shell, International Harvester and Alcoa Aluminium have built up large manufacturing complexes. These industries join other Geelong secondary activities such as textile, meat freezers and a cannery. Over 42 per cent of Geelong's workforce are employed in these secondary industries, some 22,000 people. This proportion is about 10 per cent higher than the state average, a correlation which shows the importance of these secondary activities to Geelong. Specifically, about 10,000 people or about 18 per cent of Geelong's workforce are employed in the metal/electrical industry.

Geelong is a growing city. In 1976, 136,636 people lived in the city compared to the 1971 figure of 115,181, a difference of 16,455. This represents an increase of 14.3 per cent over five years, or an annual growth of 2.8 per cent. The only appreciable difference between the age breakdown of Geelong's population and the Victorian average is that 38.5 per cent of Geelong's population is under the age of 20 while 36.1 per cent of the state is under this age, a difference of 2.4 per cent.

At the beginning of 1980 the study centre office was moved to the former Geelong Technical School. The present location is in a central position in the town, on the main road through Geelong, less than a kilometre from the city centre.

The building itself is a typical large, brick Education Department secondary school building. It is about 50 years old.

The facilities are extensive. They include substantial office space, a central student/staff common room, a staff refreshment room, several large teaching rooms and a language laboratory. It is expected that some departments of the Gordon Technical College will move into the building in the next few years, thereby making claims on those facilities.

Like other VTOCN centres, all of the facilities of the college are available to off campus students (who are in fact enrolled students of that institution) such as the Gordon library although it is located at the main campus, several kilometres away.

The centre serves as the main meeting place for off campus students although use is made of the main campus facilities.

The present regional co-ordinator is employed full-time and supervises all of the administrative and teaching functions of the study centre.

The centre has a relatively sophisticated system for monitoring student progress and recording information, a video display terminal 'on line' with central computer facilities. This centre is one of the few in the network that uses such a system.

All students of the study centre are enrolled as students of the Gordon Technical College. There were 780 students enrolled in mid 1980, representing some 1,200 subject enrolments. The Geelong study centre is the largest of the country VTOCN centres and is among the larger in the network. Unlike many of the country centres, the majority of enrolled students live within Geelong , with a further 25 per cent of students living in the surrounding area. Distance does not seem to be a problem for most students.

Of the approximately 200 subjects offered through VTOCN, almost all are being taken by some students at the Geelong centre. Due to this high total enrolment figure, tutorials can be offered in most (150) subjects. Typical of the VTOCN, the largest enrolment of students is in business studies subjects.

Some effort has been directed recently to encourage students to take only one or two subjects in the off campus mode, as drop-out rates have shown a much higher rate of discontinuation where students are taking more than two subjects. Such students, when in difficulty, usually withdraw from all subjects rather than withdrawing from just one.

The Gordon centre employs 47 local tutors, about half of whom are also staff of the Gordon Technical College. Another quarter are local teachers; the remaining quarter are local business and professional people. The 47 local tutors cover about 150 of the subjects offered. Only about 15 to 20 of the subjects offered are taught by network tutors (mostly in Melbourne) due to lack of sufficient student enrolments in the subject or to lack of local expertise.

The tutors' major role is the marking of assignments but with the higher enrolments Geelong, they are also involved in tutorials, practical classes and seminars. There is a much better response to tutorials in vocationally-oriented subjects (such as business studies) than in more interest oriented subjects (such as H.S.C. subjects).

One particularly interesting innovation at the Gordon centre is the introduction of the Tutor Interventionist Pilot Program, 1980 (TIPP). In this program tutors are encouraged to make contact with students. This is a reversal of the usual situation. The program is an attempt to overcome the apparent reticence of students to initiate contact with tutors. While there have been some students annoyed at the 'invasion of their privacy', generally the program seems to have had positive results. This program is very new, however, and has not yet been fully evaluated.

MILDURA OFF CAMPUS CENTRE

The city of Mildura lies on the banks of the Murray River, about 560 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, in the Mallee district. This region is the state's most important wheat and grazing area.

The climate, low rainfall and abundant sunshine have helped the area to develop. Mildura, if the travel brochures are to be believed, literally grows out of a sea of vines. Over 70 per cent of these fruits are sultanas; the present trend is for sultana plantings to increase further at the expense of currants and old citrus plantings. By comparison with the vineyards, the acreage of vegetables is considerably less. For these reasons Mildura has been labelled 'the dried fruit capital of Australia'.

The city has a retail shopping centre far bigger than normally would be expected in a town of its size. In fact, over 11 per cent of Mildura's workforce are employed as sales workers, a figure about four per cent higher than the state average. Over seven per cent of Mildura's workforce are classified as farmers. There are few manufacturing and processing establishments which are not concerned directly with materials from the district. The numbers in the secondary industry workforce are low in comparison with cities of similar size. In fact, only 22 per cent of Mildura's population are employed in these industries, 10 per cent less than the state average.

The climate and riverside setting makes Mildura a tourist attraction. Being a tourist centre it is not surprising to find that over nine per cent of Mildura's population are employed in the entertainment, recreation, hotel and restaurant business.

Mildura is a growing city. In 1971, its population numbered about 13,200. Five years later, it had grown to 14,400, an increase of 9.2 per cent (an annual increase of just over 1.8 per cent). Just over 35 per cent of the population is under the age of 20, a figure comparable to the state average. Mildura has an unusually high proportion of its population over the age of 65. In fact, 13.7 per cent, or about 1,800 people, fall in this bracket (about four per cent higher than the state average). It seems reasonable to suggest that the city's climate probably makes it a popular retirement area.

The VTOCN study centre in Mildura began in 1976. The administrative operations are housed within the Sunraysia College of TAFE, which is responsible for the administration of the broader TAFE activities in the region extending from northwestern Victoria to southwestern New South Wales and eastern South Australia. The facilities of the Mildura TAFE study centre are in fact geographically spread about the town. They consist of:

- an administrative office in Mildura's Civic Building, a government building in the main street of the town;
- the facilities of the Mildura Technical School, about half a mile from the central area of Mildura; and
- the facilities of the Irymple Technical School, several miles outside of the town.

The office in central Mildura administers the centre and is the base for the co-ordinator and secretarial/clerical staff, who also perform other duties within the broader TAFE activities in the region. The office is responsible for:

- forwarding study materials;
- arranging tutorials, workshops, and seminars;
- handling assignments;
- co-ordinating local tutors;
- enrolling students and providing some course counselling; and
- monitoring student progress.

The Mildura Technical School and the Irymple Technical School are the main teaching venues and resource facilities for local students. Both schools have libraries and media resources.

The regional VTOCN co-ordinator is responsible for all the administrative functions of the centre, as well as some course counselling for enrolling students. About 90 per cent of the co-ordinator's workload is related to VTOCN; in addition, he supervises 'E.P.U.Y' (Educational

Program for Unemployed Youth) and 'Aboriginal Access' programs in the area.

With only about 160 students, the Mildura centre is the smallest VTOCN centre. Only about 130 of the 200 VTOCN subjects are taken by students here. The great majority of subjects have very small enrolment figures with the majority of students taking business studies courses.

The Mildura centre employs 18 local tutors, who are mostly staff of the technical schools in the area. Some are local business people. These 18 tutors cover about 30 of the subjects offered. The remaining 100 subjects are covered by network tutors (mostly based in Melbourne).

Approximately 80 to 90 per cent of the tutor's work involves marking assignments with limited involvement in practical classes, workshops and tutorials.

FRANKSTON OFF CAMPUS CENTRE

Frankston is a residential and tourist township on the southeast shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is the municipal centre of the City of Frankston and the largest town on the Mornington Peninsula. Frankston is 35 kilometres from Melbourne by rail or road. The main road connecting Frankston and Melbourne is the Nepean Highway.

The City of Frankston is a growing city. In 1976 about 72,000 people resided in Frankston. In 1971 the figure was 58,000; (an increase of about 14,000). This represents an increase of 24 per cent over five years, or an annual increase of about 4.8 per cent.

About 32 per cent of its population are under the age of 14. This is about six per cent higher than the Melbourne average. In contrast, only 10.6 per cent of its population are over the age of 60, compared to the Melbourne average of 12.6 per cent, a difference of two per cent.

With numerous light industries, Frankston is the industrial/manufacturing centre of the immediate region. The manufacturing industries employ 23.3 per cent of Frankston's workforce. Moreover, the construction industry employs 10 per cent of Frankston's workforce. The workforce of Frankston is orientated toward secondary industry, with over 10,000 of its members employed as production workers/labourers. (This figure represents people being employed within or outside the limits of the City of Frankston).

Frankston boasts an excellent shopping centre. Wholesale and retail trade businesses employ 20.5 per cent of Frankston's workforce, 14.6 per cent involved in retail and 5.9 per cent in wholesale. In fact, over 5,000 of Frankston's workforce (about 10.2 per cent) are specifically employed as sales workers.

Frankston is the service centre of the region, with community services employing about 14 per cent of Frankston's workforce, some 6.8 per cent in education and 4.7 per cent in health.

Frankston Technical College is the major TAFE institution in the Mornington Peninsula region. The general aims of this college are:

- To provide vocational education (including initial training, updating and retraining) for a wide range of occupations.
- To provide members of the adult community (beyond compulsory school leaving age) with the opportunity to overcome deficiences in basic (primary and secondary) education which restrict their employment prospects (including entry into post-secondary education).
- To provide the above to disadvantaged groups, such as the handicapped or early school leavers.
- To provide a community resource in adult education and provide programs which contribute to the gaining of personal and/or recreational skills.
- To meet the needs of as wide a cross section of the community as possible by providing full-time, part-time, day-time and evening courses, and courses that can be

done at the main college, at off campus centres
(through the Bayside Learning network) or by external
studies (correspondence).

The college's External Studies Department, working in conjunction with the TAFE Off Campus Study Network, offers an extensive range of courses to students who are not normally able to attend classes. In the interests of flexibility students may enrol as mixed mode students, studying some externally or internally and some in day or evening classes. External studies students can choose from 13 major courses/certificates. They include:

- bridging courses;
- certificate of applied science;
- certificate of business studies;
- electrical course;
- electronic course;
- farm management certificate;
- higher school certificate;
- licencing courses;
- navigation courses;
- police studies certificate;
- foreman;
- supervision certificate and vocational courses.

All the external students are enrolled at the Frankston Technical College in the appropriate department. The college makes no differentiation in status between off and on campus students.

Physical Aspects

The centre in this system acts primarily as an administrative annexe of the college, looking after all off campus students and is located across the road from the main campus sharing a house with a computer section of the college.

The administration office houses the three secretaries employed by the off campus unit and caters for about 500 off campus students.

There is no provision for tutorials in the centre itself. Most tutorials are held at the main campus of the college or, if the numbers are small enough, at the home of the tutor.

This centre is open five days a week between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. except during the enrolment periods when it opens an hour or so earlier.

Catchment Area

Just under 50 per cent of the off campus students reside within two kilometres of the campus. Of the others more than a third live within five kilometres, almost a third reside between 10 and 20 kilometres from the college while 15 per cent live between 20 and 30 kilometres from Frankston, and over 12 per cent reside beyond 30 kilometres.

Staffing

The study centre is run by a staff of five people; a co-ordinator, three secretaries and a research and development officer. The co-ordinator has been seconded half-time to work on a computer project. The secretaries are all part-time. They represent together almost two full-time equivalent positions. The research office is employed on a 0.4 time fraction. TAFE allows the college two full-time equivalent posts, excluding the research officer, for its administrative tasks. The college therefore appears to be providing a measure of additional support.

Most off campus tutors are members of the technical college's staff. There are a total of 38 tutors employed by the off campus section.

Functions

The study centre acts principally as the administrative centre for off campus students. The co-ordinator himself suggested that his role in the system is not so important because the secretarial staff carry out most of the day to day functions.

The role of the centre is to organise tutorials, mail course materials, answer all off campus enquiries, act as an agency for RMIT, and help new tutors.

The centre does not provide space for organised tutorials. Most of then are held on the main technical college campus. Subjects rarely have more than one tutorial per semester.

Over 50 per cent of the off campus students enrol in person for their courses. During term it is estimated that about three-quarters of the students use the centre. Some 10 per cent come to the centre in person; the remainder use telephone and mail enquiries equally.

Library Facilities

Because no distinction is made by the college between off campus and on campus students, all off campus materials in the library are integrated into the main collection.

RMIT OFF CAMPUS CENTRE

History

The RMIT TAFE Off Campus Study Centre is set up within the Technical College of RMIT and as such functions similarly to other off campus centres in the network.

Melbourne

Melbourne, built on the River Yarra, is the capital city of Victoria and is the continent's second largest city.

It is an important trade and manufacturing city being the market centre for the state's agricultural products, and the principal centre for the manufacture of textiles, shoes and agricultural and engineering machinery. The inner metropolitan area of Melbourne produces clothing and fabrics, while the outer suburbs are more involved with metal and machinery industries. Over 380,000 Melburnians are involved in these secondary industries. This represents about 34 per cent of the total workforce. This proportion is about two per cent higher than the Victorian state average.

Melbourne began as a commercial centre and this is still its most vital role. The central business district supports large department stores and many specialised shops, which exist because of the great volume of shopper traffic. In recent years, several large suburban retail centres and shopping complexes have been developed. The extent of retail trade activities in Melbourne is exemplified by the fact that over 18 per cent of its population are employed in retail trade businesses. Specifically, 90,000 Melburnians (7.7 per cent of the workforce) are employed as sales workers.

Melbourne is also the financial centre of Victoria and, it is sometimes argued of Australia. To the west of the central business district one can find the head offices of some of Australia's largest industrial, financial, legal, and shipping operations while many regional offices of multinational corporations are located there also. These activities, together with federal and state public services, give Melbourne's economic structure a tertiary rather than primary and secondary flavour. In fact, about 40 per cent of Melbourne's population are professionals, administrators or clerical workers. This is about five per cent higher than the state average.

Between 1971-1976 the population of Melbourne increased in total by four per cent from 2,503,000 in 1971 to just over 2,604,000.

Being the largest city in Victoria, Melbourne contributes significantly to any Victorian state average figures. In comparing the age structure the only significant difference between the two sets of figures is that

10.7 per cent of Melbourne's population are aged between 15 and 19, a figure 1.8 per cent higher than the state average of 8.9 per cent. This difference could be attributed to the migration of school leavers to the city in search of employment.

The Off Campus Centre at RMIT was the last to be established (1978) in the VTOCN system. This was a result of VTOCN itself commencing in 1976 by the re-enrolment of former external students of RMIT into the newly created regional off campus centres. It was only at the completion of this process that the remaining RMIT students were incorporated into the RMIT Off Campus centre.

Facilities

The present Off Campus Centre began in and still occupies a small cluster of offices in one of the newer buildings on the RMIT campus. The building is also occupied by a number of service departments of RMIT, such as student administration, the main library, and some teaching facilities. It is intended that the building will be the main service block to RMIT and that most of the teaching functions will be relocated.

The present location is quite central to Melbourne.

The offices in the centre include a co-ordinator's office, a large general office, and a number of storage areas. As the centre is used principally for administration, storage, and the delivery of study materials, space is regarded as sufficient. As with other off campus centres the facilities of the local college, in this case RMIT Technical College, are available for use by off campus students and no distinction is made between off campus and on campus students. In practice, however, the main facilities used by off campus students seems to be the library and accommodation for meetings and tutorials. At present there has been no arrangement made for mailing library loans to TAFE off campus students and books must be borrowed in person. The library is conveniently located in the same building as the Off Campus Centre. It should be pointed out that while some tutorials are arranged specifically for RMIT students, many more tutorials/practical sessions are arranged by the co-ordinating authority (Network Tutorials) in and around Melbourne and these are also open to RMIT students.

Functions and Staffing

The centre is staffed by the co-ordinator and four full-time clerical staff. Their main functions involve forwarding study materials, handling assignment traffic, employing and contacting local tutors, and monitoring student progress. Enrolment of students and any necessary course counselling occurs within normal Technical College procedures. The co-ordinator is responsible for the arrangement of any tutorials, most of which are held on the main campus. The close proximity between RMIT Off Campus Centre and the VTOCN Co-ordinating Authority allows the latter to provide some assistance with administrative functions.

Role of the Co-ordinator.

The present co-ordinator has been in charge of the study centre since its inception in 1978 and is a full-time employee of RMIT. He is responsible for co-ordinating the administrative and teaching functions of the centre.

Students

The off campus students at the centre are all enrolled students of RMIT. There were some 1,470 students enrolled in mid 1980, representing approximately 2,400 student enrolments and making the RMIT Off Campus Centre the largest in the network.

One particular feature of this Centre is its responsibility to service interstate and overseas off campus students. There are more than 100 overseas students and over 400 interstate students currently enrolled, that is about a third of the total enrolment. Of the 200 subjects available through the VTOCN system, almost all are taken by some off campus students, again with the major enrolments being in the field of business studies (about 50 per cent of the total).

Tutors and Staff

The distinction between network tutors and local tutors, which is important for students at country off campus centres (i.e. the difference between having a tutor who can be contacted locally or one who can only be contacted in Melbourne), is one which is far less relevant at the RMIT Study Centre. Most of the network tutors are, in fact, living in Melbourne, and many are actually RMIT staff members. Therefore for students in the Melbourne area there is little difference in accessibility between the two types of tutor. For overseas or interstate students, however, neither can be easily contacted.

Accordingly the great majority of the tutoring staff servicing RMIT TAFE Off Campus students are network tutors, of whom there are more than 200 compared with six tutors employed by the centre who do not also have network responsibility. More than one tutor may be responsible in subjects where enrolments or subject content requires.

In the past 12 months about 8-12 tutorials/practical sessions have been arranged specifically for students of the RMIT centre. About 30 have been arranged in and around Melbourne through the co-ordinating authority. In some subjects (e.g. electronics and other practical trade subjects) one tutorial/practical session may be used to cover the teaching contact requirements for up to four related subjects.

In addition to teaching/tutorial functions, a number of the academic staff of relevant RMIT departments regard it as part of their overall responsibility to provide an advisory service in academic matters to the off campus operations.

FOOTSCRAY OFF CAMPUS CENTRE

For over 60 years Footscray Technical College has been the major centre for middle-level education in the western region of Melbourne. The institute was established in 1916. In the 1950's it was accorded college status, and in 1966 it became affiliated with the Victorian Institute of Colleges. In 1968 the college name was changed to Footscray Institute of Technology.

The institute includes Footscray Technical College, **and** Footscray Technical Secondary School as well as providing advanced education courses. The Footscray Technical College is located in the heart of Footscray about five kilometres from the main institute campus.

The off campus centre of Footscray Technical College was established in 1977. Since its inception the student population serviced has steadily grown. In 1980 it reached 800 students. The co-ordinator believes that, with the staff and facilities available to him, this number of students is close to the optimal size.

Off campus study is available for students who choose not to attend formal classes or who are unable to do so, over a wide range of courses. These include:

- bridging courses;
- certificate of applied science;
- Higher School Certificate subjects;
- Certificate of business studies;
- Farm management certificate;
- Electrical courses;
- Second Mates study assistance course;
- Electronics courses;
- Licensing courses;
- Road Foreman courses;
- Supervision certificates; and
- a number of vocational courses.

Physical Aspects

The study centre is essentially an administrative annexe of the college looking after the needs of all off campus students. In 1980 it was located in an old shop not far from the main building of the college. The centre contains three rooms; an administrative/receptionist office, a co-ordinator's office and a conference room. There is no provision for tutorials in the centre itself. They are held in the main building.

The centre is open five days a week, between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. During the enrolment period the centre is open until 9.30 p.m.

Functions

The co-ordinator sees the off campus unit as providing an alternative mode of study to students who cannot attend regular lectures and, of course, to students who prefer this mode.

The role of the centre is to:

- enrol all off campus students;
- send all course materials;
- answer all off campus enquiries;
- help and counsel all tutors. (All tutors are given a seven page guide to teaching external students);
- organise tutorials. (In quite a number of courses offered through off campus study there are requirements that students attend a certain number of practical classes and participate in some seminars, which are arranged at specific times during the year; and
- accommodate small-scale examinations.

Staffing

There are three full-time staff employed by the centre: a co-ordinator, secretary and one full-time tutor. The Footscray centre uses 75 network tutors and 25 local tutors, who come primarily from the college staff.

The primary function of the co-ordinator is to make the system run smoothly. However, the co-ordinator does see himself occupying a number of specific roles. His managerial role requires him to develop the centre to its maximum functioning level. Specifically, this involves maintaining an optimal student population size. Co-ordinating tutorial staff and liaising between students and tutors. The co-ordinator, being a former member of teaching staff, believes that his understanding of student and tutor problems enables him to offer a valuable service as a counsellor. For instance, the co-ordinator encourages students to keep assignments up to date and regards this as an essential element in keeping students 'on course'. The co-ordinator feels that a person in his position should be more than a good administrator, he should have teaching experience so that his mangement and advising is based on a thorough understanding of the learning process.

Usage

According to the co-ordinator the students use the centre frequently with up to 10 students visiting the centre each day and some 20 or so telephone enquiries.

Students

While undertaking a particular course, students may enrol in subjects either off campus or on campus in whatever 'mix' suits their particular needs. The qualifications gained as an off campus student are identical to those obtained when the same course is completed on campus. Off campus students enrolled at this college are able to use the library and other resource centre facilities in the same way as their on campus student counterparts.

Catchment Area

About 15 per cent of the off campus students reside within five kilometres of the main campus. Nearly half of the students, about 45 per cent, live between five and 10 kilometres from the campus. An additional 20 per cent live between 10 and 20 kilometres from the college. The remaining 20 per cent live 20 kilometres or more from the main campus.

BENDIGO OFF CAMPUS CENTRE

History

The Bendigo Off Campus Study Centre is located within the Bendigo Technical College, part of the Bendigo College of Advanced Education. It began operations in 1976.

Bendigo is an important rail centre 153 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, linked to it by the Calder Highway. It is a regional centre servicing an area extending considerably beyond the immediate district. Initially it was established as a gold town.

Bendigo is the state's largest egg producing centre, supplying half of Victoria's eggs. Other primary interests include sheep, fat lambs, cattle, pigs and grain farming. Bendigo boasts the largest cattle saleyard in Australia. Some 75 per cent of the cattle and 50 per cent of the pigs produced in the region are brought to Bendigo for marketing and processing.

Although Bendigo grew as a gold town from pastoral surroundings, its present character has been influenced by the diversification of its functions and the expansion of agriculture in its region. In addition, a substantial manufacturing industry has developed, partly based on the processing of local raw materials, (e.g. egg-handling, meat-processing, poultry foods, timber milling, fruit processing), but owing much also to decentralisation policies, (e.g. textile and rubber factories, agricultural implements). Over 35 per cent of Bendigo's workforce are employed in secondary industries, with light engineering being especially prominent.

In recent years population growth has been slight. In fact, in 1971 there were about 32,000 people in the City of Bendigo, compared to just over 32,500 people in 1976, an increase of only 1.7 per cent over the five year period. Over 20 per cent of Bendigo's population are between 15 and 25 years of age, about 2.9 per cent higher than the state average. In contrast only 15.9 per cent of Bendigo's population are under the age of

10, which is about 1.1 per cent lower than the state average. The other noticeable variation in the age breakdown is that 14.3 per cent of Bendigo's population are over the age of 65, 5.3 per cent more than the state's average.

The Bendigo Technical College is located virtually in the centre of Bendigo and is easily reached by transport. Parking appears to present no major problems.

Facilities

The study centre is located in two rooms of a small cottage in the grounds of the Technical College. Other college services occupy the remainder of the cottage.

Functions

The study centre carries out the enrolment procedures for students, including advertising, counselling and establishing student files. This particular study centre completes the enrolment procedures by mailing enrolments forms to RMIT, which processes them on its computer. The study centre is then supplied with both student and course lists. All variations of enrolments are sent to RMIT for similar processing. Enrolments are conducted on a 'rolling' basis at the discretion of the co-ordinator.

Despatch of teaching materials and the processing of assignments are also handled by the centre, together with all the associated recording. Examinations, both at the college and at specified examination centres, are arranged through the college's examination office. Examination papers are distributed either by RMIT through the centre or directly to examination centres by the Education Department. Marks come back to the centre, which then sends out results to students. Tutorials are arranged by the centre largely with local tutors, most of whom are on the staff of the college.

Role of the Co-ordinator

The present co-ordinator is a permanent staff member of the Bendigo Technical College. In addition to administrative functions, he sees his major task as one of counselling or advising prospective and established students. He estimates that in an average week he would handle as many as 200 enquiries, mostly by telephone but with a number of students dropping in to the centre.

Students

Students at the centre are enrolled students of the Bendigo Technical College. They number 430 representing the equivalent of about 669 full year subject enrolments.

Enrolments cover a wide range of subjects. The discontinuation rate is estimated by the co-ordinator to be about 55 per cent.

In general, students make only limited use of the facilities of the college. Generally, they use the college library only in the early stages of their courses. This is largely because most students who stay with the course purchase their own test books, and many courses require little reading other than prescribed texts. Other college facilities, such as sporting and recreation facilities, are little used. The canteen is used infrequently. Off campus students do not attend social functions and there are no orientation sessions. There are only limited numbers of tutorials, generally one or at the most two in a subject each semester. Each is of three hours' duration. Most of the tutorials are held on the college premises. Some tutorials are held in Melbourne, but because of the travelling required, attendance by Bendigo students is limited. Tutors from Melbourne do not come to Bendigo.

When their postcodes are examined, it is clear that students are widely distributed with perhaps half of them living in Bendigo or its suburbs. The rest are scattered over a wide region. The accompanying table shows something of the 'scatter'.

TABLE EIGHT

Showing frequency of students by postcode.

Number of Students	Number of Postcodes
1	23
2	7
3	3
4	5
5	4
6	1
7	0
8	1
10 - 19	4
20 - 39	3
40	1

The above table shows that for each of 23 postcodes there is onlv a single student; in seven there are two students in each, whilst the majority of students are covered by eight postcodes.

Tutors and Staff

The full-time staff at the centre includes the co-ordinator and a clerical assistant, together with part-time tutors.

COMMENT ON THE VTOCN STUDY CENTRES

The development of the VTOCN was an imaginative and far-sighted development. RMIT, to the extent that it sponsored the plan, is to be commended. As a new development and despite its difficulties, it extended the quality and accessibility of distance education for students in the TAFE sector. However, there are evidences of tension and strain in the system. These are not unexpected.

Firstly, the 'centres' vary considerably. Distance education is accorded differing importance within the colleges. Procedures are integrated within the college system in different ways. Co-ordinators have quite different views about their own roles and shape their jobs to meet their perceptions. As well, the relationship between individual centres and RMIT differ significantly, principally in terms of the extent to which they depend on services provided by RMIT.

All the centres appear successful in attracting students, but some less so in holding them. Indeed, discontinuation rates in some parts of the system are reportedly as high as 50 per cent or more. Reactions to this suggest one of the critical differences between centres. In some the high discontinuation rates are accepted with regret, but with little attempt to improve the situation. This attitude appears to reflect a more 'dependent' orientation towards RMIT characterised by more limited feelings both of autonomy and of responsibility. In others there is a much more proprietory concern with the local off campus system. In those cases the discontinuation issue is seen as a local college problem and attempts are made to ameliorate it. The point, however, is not the discontinuation rate but the differences in attitude towards it.

Centres, particularly those outside the metropolitan Melbourne area and in Geelong, have more limited resources in, for example, being able to appoint a full range of tutors and in attracting sufficient numbers of students to permit tutorial groups to be held across the full range of subjects.

In those cases the centre depends not only on tutors provided by RMIT, but the students at the centre normally must travel to Melbourne for tutorials. This limits attendance substantially.

One of the irritations that manifests itself in the off campus centres is over the question of funding. The co-ordinating authority draws up estimates, prepares funding submissions, determines the budget on the basis of funds allocated and distributes funds to the constitual colleges. However, these funds are 'tied' and colleges do not have the freedom to use the total amount of money provided in a flexible way.

There would be a preference, on the part of a number of colleges, for receiving a total grant for the off campus operation and being able to build that into the college budget as they saw fit. Again the point is not concerned with which view is correct but simply the identification of a source of tension.

There is some evidence of a lack of clarity in the off campus centres about the role of RMIT vis a vis the VTOCN co-ordinating authority. Reference to the co-ordinating authority is relatively rare and staff in the colleges tend to refer to the central body as RMIT. Whilst there is no doubt that staff are aware of the distinctions within the system it is clear that they see the operation as very much an integral part of RMIT. Indeed it is in its present form and this is the basis of some of the growing tensions between colleges in the system and RMIT.

The question as to whether the centres are correctly viewed as 'study centres' needs to be addressed. Essentially the network uses the resources of RMIT to provide for the development and production of teaching materials, computer services where required (particularly in respect to enrolments), some accounting services, and the supply of specialist tutors. Two common concerns were raised by the regional centres. Firstly the quality of the learning materials was an issue usually raised by tutors. Secondly, both co-ordinators and tutors were concerned about delays in the delivery of learning materials.

With these kinds of concerns, together with the attitudes towards autonomy, several of the centres want a restructuring of the system. Essentially this would require a change in the relationship with RMIT by allowing the network freedom to contract with suppliers of services without being compelled to use RMIT resources. Course development materials, production and other services could be contracted out to other suppliers by the network. The consortium of colleges, with RMIT as an equal partner, would thus control a distance education system in which colleges individually administered and delivered the courses which collectively they developed and produced. So far it has not been possible to gauge how strong this feeling is: it could be relatively isolated. But it is likely to develop. Again, the comment is included not to focus on the issue itself, but to illustrate that collaborative arrangements in education such as the VTOCN are subject to continual pressure because of institutional autonomy. In particular, there is a clear reluctance to afford one institution a position of pre-eminence and control.

This suggests that while the VTOCN concept has appeal at the tertiary level it would need to be modified to protect the drive of institutions towards achieving or maintaining autonomy. Otherwise, any such arrangement will be subject to pressures which will make it difficult if not impossible to operate in the longer term.

One of the more obvious conclusions, then, is that the use of the term 'study centre', as applied to a local college within the VTOCN system, is a misnomer. The individual college is offering programs into which it enrols students, its own students, to study off campus. Such students are counted within the college statistics, have access to all the relevant facilities of the college and generally live in reasonable proximity to that college. It would be more appropriate to think of the system, therefore, as a consortium of colleges rather than as a network of study centres.

Even within the local college, reference to the 'study centre' is inappropriate. The 'study centre' is really the administrative unit responsible for off campus students in that college.

Notwithstanding these observations, the VTOCN is a considerable advance on any formal co-operative arrangement in distance education in Australia. As such it is deserving of considerable attention.

Some specific comments should be made on the question of VTOCN colleges and the extent to which they meet their aims and objectives. These aims are to

- make a range of learning resources accessible to students;
- provide opportunity for student-student and student-tutor contact;
- provide venues for meetings of students;
- be a source of information and advice to current and intending students; and
- provide facilities for study, when necessary.

Clearly, the colleges, in servicing off campus students, are able to meet these objectives. They provide access for students to all the facilities of the college, meeting rooms, library, computer and canteen. Learning materials are distributed by the colleges and tutors are employed by them.

Students are able to use these facilities for individual study or to meet other students. Because the co-ordinators of the study centres are members of local college staff, they have familiarity with and access to information needed by students. The question is not whether these facilities are provided but whether they are used. In general the answer seems to be a moderate attendance at tutorials, considerable use by students of the centres as sources of information, limited use of library facilities and almost no use of the centres for private study or informal groups. Again, the comment needs to be made that the nature of the learning materials has considerable bearing on student usage.

Investigations up to this point have not unearthed any strong demand from students for additional facilities or services. The more immediate concerns of staff are confined to the quality of learning materials and to delays in receiving the material for despatching to students.

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Background

Established in 1974 by an Act of Parliament, Deakin University is the youngest of the Australian universities. The main campus occupies some 200 acres at Waurn Ponds, about eight kilometres southwest of Geelong. The university also has two other campuses, one at the State College of Victoria at Geelong and the other in a rented, converted woollen mill.

Deakin University is the first, and at present the only, non-metropolitan university in Victoria.

History

Teaching at the university began in 1977 by incorporating the students, courses and many of the staff of the Gordon Institute of Technology and the State College of Victoria at Geelong. Among the objectives of the university laid down by the 1974 Act of Parliament is to provide "the opportunity for tertiary education at university level to all qualified persons whether within or outside Victoria by means of external study programs." From the beginning, therefore, the university has had a clear commitment to the development and provision of distance education at the tertiary level. This commitment is a major one; in 1979, off campus students constituted 48 per cent of total enrolment.

The proportion of off campus students will increase in future years. However, by producing learning materials and experimenting with methods that are suitable for both on and off campus students, the university is attempting to meet the needs of both types of student. There is, however, some evidence that on campus students are not entirely satisfied with these arrangements, and that they feel 'disadvantaged'.

Deakin is a small university in terms of total enrolments, but its off campus enrolments make it one of the larger tertiary distance education systems in Australia.

The admissions policy for degree and diploma courses is similar to those of other Victorian universities. With normal entry, admissions are handled by the Victorian Universities Admissions Committee (VUAC). Special entry is available for mature age applicants who do not fulfil the usual HSC or TOP requirements.

Deakin University is organised on the basis of schools, which have both academic and administrative responsibilities. At the present time, six schools have been established: management, education, engineering and architecture, humanities, sciences and social sciences.

The governing body of the university is the University Council, presided over by the chancellor. He is elected by the council. Its membership includes members of Parliament, persons with special interests in tertiary education in Ballarat and Bendigo, and representatives of the academic and general staff.

The council is responsible for the academic and administrative functions of the university, while the Academic Board is its principal academic authority. The board's membership is drawn from the six schools; undergraduate, postgraduate and off campus student representatives; and up to eight professors, the chancellor, vice chancellor, vice principal, dean of educational services, and chief librarian.

University Services

Library:

The university library's main collection is at the Waurn Ponds campus, although there is a branch library at the school of education campus in Geelong.

The collection is made up of some 160,000 items, including books, maps, microfilm, and microfiche, and audio visual material, as well as suitable equipment.

For off campus students the library attempts to provide the same access and assistance as is available to on campus students. Delivery of library items is provided by a direct courier service between the library and off campus students. Off campus students are also serviced by co-operative arrangements between the university library and local public libraries, as well as by the libraries of several of the regional colleges of advanced education.

Student Services

Student services at Deakin are similar to those of most other tertiary institutions except that they are grouped together in a single unit, University Community Services. These services include health, counselling, careers, writing and study skills, financial assistance and general welfare services.

Part of the provision for off campus students has been a 'counselling package', which helps prepare new students for university work. The booklet introduces students to off campus studies and available resources. It also provides some initial information on study techniques.

While all off campus students receive this package at the time of enrolment, those admitted under special entry provisions are asked to work through the package before notifying the university if they wish to confirm their enrolment.

Off Campus Studies

History

The first enrolment of off campus students at Deakin was at the beginning of the 1978 academic year. Thus the distance education system is still only in its infancy in comparison with other such systems in Australia. In this short time, however, sophisticated systems for developing courses, producing materials and supporting students at a distance have been established, and the number of off campus students has risen dramatically (Gough, 1979).

Courses and Subjects

Deakin offers off campus degree programs in three of the six schools of the university. Students may earn a bachelor of arts degree in the schools of humanities, social sciences and education. A bachelor of education is also available through the school of education.

In addition, the school of sciences offers first-level biology courses as subjects which may be studied in the off campus mode towards a bachelor of arts qualification.

Not all of the courses available on campus are offered off campus. Although the number of courses available is restricted, students have some measure of choice, since they may take courses in schools other than those in which they are enrolled.

Masters and doctoral programs by research at Deakin include a master of arts in the schools of education, commerce, humanities and social sciences; a master of science in the schools of engineering and architecture, and sciences; and a doctor of philosophy in all six of the Deakin schools. Some of these qualifications may be gained through enrolment as an off campus student.

A graduate diploma in computing is planned for 1981. An off campus Masters of Business Administration starts in that year also.

Organisation of Off Campus Teaching

Teaching materials at Deakin are developed by course teams in the schools, not by a separate department of external studies. The course team mode of development derives largely from the Open University. However, the course team concept has been modified to suit a small institution and to cope with the requirements that new courses be available both on and off campus.

The major input to these course teams is from members of the academic staff, who also teach courses on campus. However, the teams may include writers from other institutions, editors, designers and media specialists. Course developers from the Centre for Educational Services are also part of the course teams. They act as resource persons as well as providing co-ordination with the other divisions involved in the production of the materials.

The Centre for Educational Services is administratively independent of the schools, yet maintains close contact with them in course development work and specific aspects of production and delivery of the off campus study programs.

The responsibilities of the Centre for Educational Services include:

- Producing the course team's completed draft in the final printed form. This involves editorial and design work as well as arranging copyright clearance, typesetting, art work, photographic reproduction, paste up, design and printing.
- Production of audio visual materials by the media unit involving production of original audio and video programs, the modification of existing programs, and the purchase of programs available commercially. The unit produces some 50 to 60 audio programs and about 20 video programs annually. Although it uses course development approaches similar to those of the Open University, Deakin has not adopted a similar large scale use of broadcast media as a teaching medium.
- Delivery of materials and services to off campus students. This includes providing information and advice to prospective students, counselling students applying for admission, despatching course materials, controlling stock, co-ordinating regional services and study centres, and assisting schools with tutorial visits and weekend schools. The centre also acts as a liaison with the bookshop to ensure that adequate supplies of

books are available for on and off campus students.

- Providing specialist student services for both on and off campus students. This includes medical, counselling and careers services, student loans, literacy and study skills, chaplaincy, and student accommodation (other than in the student residences). University Community Services is examining ways of making these services available to the distant student.

The structure of the Centre for Educational Services is shown below:

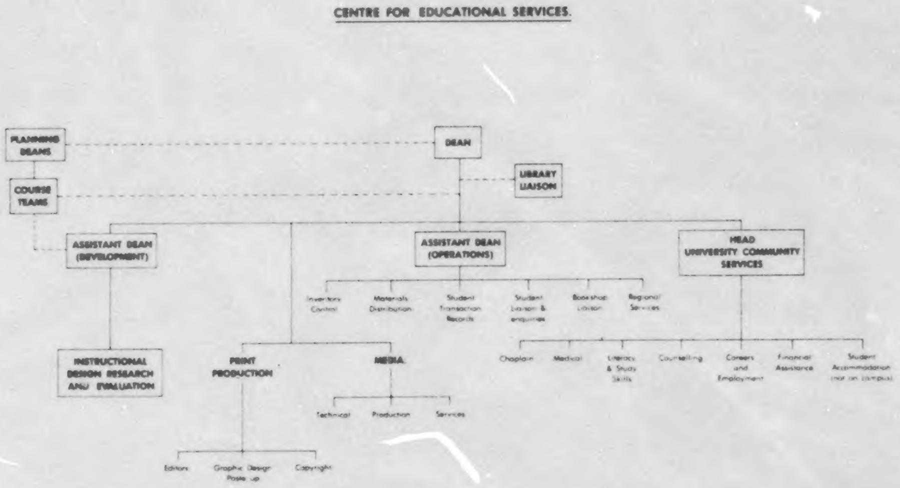
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.
PLANNING DEANS
DEAN
LIBRARY LIAISON
COURSE TEAMS
ASSISTANT DEAN (DEVELOPMENT)
ASSISTANT DEAN (OPERATIONS)
HEAD UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY SERVICES
Inventory Control
Materials Distribution
Student Transaction Records
Student Liaison & enquiries
Bookshop Liaison
Regional Services
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
PRINT PRODUCTION
MEDIA
Chaplain
Medical
Literacy & Study Skills
Counselling
Careers and Employment
Financial Assistance
Student Accommodation (not on campus)
Technical
Production
Services
Editors
Graphic Design Paste up
Copyright

FIGURE FIVE

Organisational structure for Off Campus Studies at Deakin University.

Philosophy and Methods of Off Campus Teaching

Deakin University has developed methods of teaching at a distance that are closely related to its philosophy of distance education.

Course materials are presented principally in printed form. Audio visual material and the face-to-face teaching involved in tutorial groups and study schools are seen as a valuable, though not an essential, component. Therefore, "a student should be able to complete the course without necessarily attending the campus or a study centre" (Gough, 1979; 33). The materials also are used for both on campus and off campus student, a part of the philosophy that Deakin "should not distinguish any more than absolutely necessary between on and off campus students" (Gough, 1979; 33).

This orientation is also evident in the organisational structure of Deakin. There is no separate department for external studies, and the same academic staff teach in both the on and off campus modes. It is interesting to note, however, that in using self instructional course materials as the basis for on campus teaching, the traditional role of the lecturer as the source of information and knowedge has had to be revised. On campus students now have all of the basic course material outside of lectures, and a shift is occurring towards a more independent learning style in both modes, with the teacher taking on a role more of 'helper, interpreter and guide' (Jevons, 1979; 15).

The more permanent form of the course material opens up the teaching to public comment. Scrutiny and criticism therefore provides a basis for a "self-improving educational system which is based on the materials that are subject to serious testing and in which the resulting feedback is used to improve those materials " (Jevons, 1979; 27).

The development of comprehensive course materials used for both on and off campus learning has had implications for the equality of the modes of learning and also for the methods of on campus teaching itself.

The course team method of course development is not only intended to provide a rich input for educational materials, but also to provide an opportunity for constructive criticism between team members, thus producing material of high academic standard. While this course team model is based on that of the Open University, there is a difference in scale between that organisation and Deakin. Unlike the Open University, it would be impractical for Deakin course material to be wholly original. Therefore, a large part of course development has involved "the selection and structuring of (existing) material rather than the writing of new material" (Jevons, 1979; 14). Regular assignment work is also used, as in most external study systems, as a method of student feedback on progress and also as part of assessment.

Support Systems

Library Facilities:

Off campus students may borrow from the university library in Geelong through a direct delivery service. They may use a co-operative arrangement that exists with local public libraries and with the colleges of advanced education in Bendigo, Ballarat, Warrnambool and Gippsland. Deakin is also involved in a reciprocal borrowing scheme with a number of Victorian academic libraries. In that scheme members of one institution may obtain borrowing privileges from the others. Interstate and overseas students, however, need to make arrangements with local libraries or the libraries of tertiary institutions in their own state or country.

Tutorial Groups, Self Help Groups and Workshops;

Where enough students in the one district are enrolled in the same course, a tutorial class may be formed. It meets under the guidance of a tutor appointed by the university.

The frequency of tutorials varies from course to course. While not compulsory, tutorials offer students a chance to discuss any aspect of their course with tutors and meet with other students. Students are also given the telephone numbers of tutors and encouraged to contact them with queries or difficulties.

Each semester, students are requested to complete a card indicating whether they wish to have their names, addresses and telephone numbers distributed to other students. Lists of students are then compiled and sent out according to course and regional area. The organisation of 'self-help groups' is then up to the student. If requested, help and advice can be obtained from the Operations Unit of the Centre for Educational Services.

Non-compulsory weekend schools and workshops are also arranged for students. They are held at various times during the year at Melbourne and other regional study centres.

Study Centres

The study centre system also provides a support function for the distant student. Study centres provide a venue for meetings and tutorials, limited reference libraries, audio and video tapes and equipment, and a quiet place for study.

THE STUDY CENTRE NETWORK

In 1978 the university established ten study centres. There is also a "study centre" in Pentridge Prison.

Objectives

Deakin's study centres are not seen as alternative 'campuses' providing on campus tuition. This would restrict students to a time and place, contradicting the philosophy of distance education programs.

Study centres are seen as providing

- a university presence;
- accommodation for occasional tutorials and lectures;
- facilities for storing, using and lending equipment;
- a meeting place for students; and
- a reference centre.

In the main, the Deakin study centre functions as a local, supplementary resource centre for off campus students. Attendance is not essential.

As well as providing a venue for counselling prospective and present students, these centres function as local advisory centres, informing the local community about Deakin. The first years of operation would also see staff from Deakin organising one or two tutorials a semester, providing a 'counselling' function to assist students with problems, as well as dealing with course content. Perhaps even more importantly, however, study centres serve as a venue for self initiated student groups.

These centres also provide access to the latest educational technology, especially audio visual equipment.

Because study centres were to be developed in co-operation with other organisations, Deakin staffing at such centres was to be minimal.

Type and Location

Deakin's policy was to establish study centres in appropriate places in Victoria that were likely to have sufficient numbers of students to make effective use of facilities. In each community the university sought co-operation from other educational institutions, to set up study centres where teaching and learning facilities were already available. This policy was adopted to avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities.

In Melbourne Deakin developed a study centre in the same building as that occupied by the Council for Adult Education. The council co-operated closely, particularly with respect to library and audio visual facilities. Arrangements have also been made with centres for continuing education in Horsham, Mildura, Shepparton and Wangaratta to provide study centre facilities.

Negotiations with Ballarat, Bendigo, Gippsland and Warrnambool Colleges of Advanced Education to provide study centre facilities for Deakin have been operating successfully for some years.

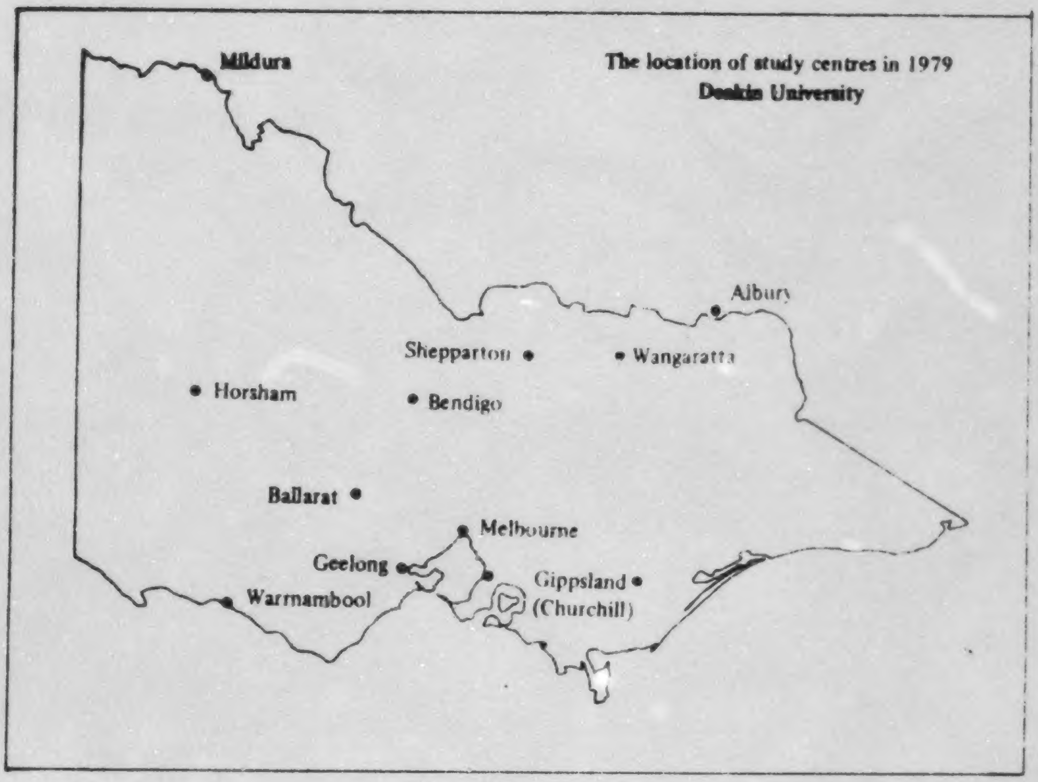
The location of study centres in 1979
Deakin University
Mildura
Albury
Shepparton
Wangaratta
Horsham
Bendigo
Ballarat
Melbourne
Geelong
Warrnambool
Gippsland
(Churchill)

FIGURE SIX

Location of Deakin University Study Centres

PROFILES OF SELECTED STUDY CENTRES

MELBOURNE STUDY CENTRE

Physical Aspects

Deakin's Melbourne Study Centre is located on the first floor of 256 Flinders Street, in a building occupied largely by the Council of Adult Education. A thumbnail sketch of Melbourne is included in the section on VTOCN centres.

The study centre contains seven rooms: a co-ordinator's office, a student lounge/tutorial room, three tutorial rooms, a storage room and an entrance hall.

The seating capacity of the three tutorial rooms is over 100 students. One room seats 20 while the other two seat 40 each. There is a dividing wall between the two larger tutorial rooms. When opened it creates a large meeting room; when closed, it provides efficient sound proofing between the two rooms. The student lounge, which contains coffee making facilities, can also be converted into a tutorial room, with a seating capacity for about 15 people.

The centre's equipment includes two mobile video units, one overhead projector, one portable blackboard for one tutorial room (as well as the permanent blackboards in the other rooms), four carrels for private study, over 100 chairs, about half dozen easy chairs in the student lounge and bulletin boards in each room. All of this equipment is less than a year old. The comfort of the student is further ensured by air conditioning and pleasant lighting.

Being situated in the central business district of Melbourne, the centre is easily accessible by public transport. Parking in the immediate vicinity presents problems.

The centre is open during the week between the hours of 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and at weekends as arranged. However the centre does have a 24 hour telephone answering service. The co-ordinator's office provides a photocopying service, and the centre stores a copy of all Deakin learning materials, including audio visual material.

Staffing

The Secretary is the only full-time staff member employed at the centre. Students at the Melbourne study centre are served by 24 regular, part-time tutors.

Catchment Area

There are over 1,250 off campus students enrolled at this study centre.

Just about 60 per cent of these students reside within 20 kilometres of the centre. Another 30 per cent live between 20 and 40 kilometres from the centre. Only six per cent of the student population live over 50 kilometres from the Melbourne centre.

TABLE NINE

Showing distribution of students in kilometres from the Melbourne Centre.

Kms. from Centre	No. of students	% of total student population
0 - 10	353	27%
11 - 20	390	31%
21 - 30	228	18%
31 - 40	146	12%
41 - 50	78	6%
50+	71	6%
Totals	1,266	100

Over 50 per cent of the students live in the southeastern suburbs while 23 per cent reside in the northeastern suburbs. Therefore, about three quarters of the student population live east of the study centre.

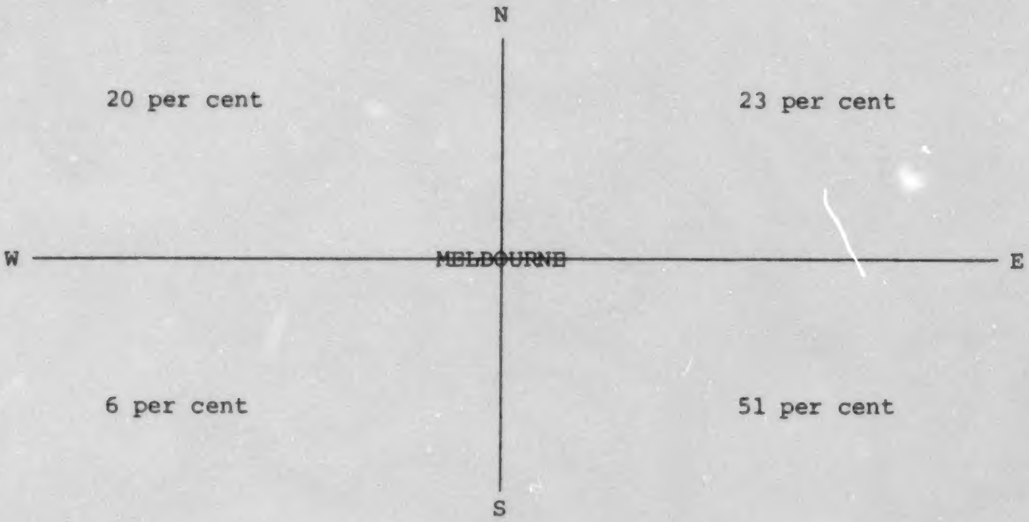

FIGURE SEVEN

Showing the approximate distribution of students of the Melbourne Study Centre.

Functions

The centre acts as a location for tutorials for private study and as an information centre.

On the average there are about 14 tutorials held in the centre every week (social science and education courses hold tutorials every two weeks, while the humanities subjects usually have two tutorials per semester). Tutorial sizes range from two to 31 students. The mean tutorial size is 8.5 students.

Weekend seminars are also held at the centre, with an average of two seminars each weekend. Some weekends in the first half of 1980 accommodated up to six seminars.

In October, three orientation sessions are held at this centre. About 40 students attend each session. Moreover, one week each year is set aside for course advising. Over a 100 students attend the centre for this.

On the average no more than half a dozen students use the centre as a place for private study. In fact, the majority of these would visit the centre to use the audio visual equipment. These audio visual facilities are also used by at least four tutorial groups every week.

The majority of the enquiries dealt with by the secretary concern, for example, problems with mailing, the time of tutorials, and so on. Typically enquiries would number a dozen or so calls each day.

It has been estimated that 50 per cent of the off campus students use the centre at some time during the academic year, either visiting in person or telephoning.

A social function at the centre has been arranged each semester for students and staff.

Library

Deakin students from the Melbourne study centre have access to the Council of Adult Education Library, located on the fourth floor of the building. The students pay a small fee for this usage. To date about 250 Deakin students are members of the library. This library is open 12 hours daily on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and is also open on Saturday afternoon. All of Deakin's teaching material is integrated into the council's library stock. Loans on each book are restricted to one week. The librarian believes that the books are well used. Much of the material is on loan most of the time. Students seem to use the library for private study in preference to the study centre. However, no numbers can be provided.

WANGARATTA STUDY CENTRE

Wangaratta is situated at the junction of the Ovens and King Rivers in the northeast of Victoria. Regarded by some as the regional capital of the area, it is 234 kilometres by rail from Melbourne. Wangaratta lies in a sloping arterial corridor which breaks the mountains in the east with the plains of the west. This central corridor is transversed by the major Sydney-Melbourne road route, thus making the city easily accessible, with both the Hume and Ovens Highways passing through the city.

Wangaratta has enjoyed development of rural industry. In this area a marked diversification of activities is evident. Pasture improvement has been the basis for the expansion of the beef, sheep and dairying industries. Other primary activities include wheat, hops and vegetable growing. However, Wangaratta is probably best known as one of Australia's major wine and tobacco producing areas.

The retail centre of Wangaratta is extensive, with 10 per cent of the city's workforce directly employed as sales workers. Industrial development over the past two decades has resulted in a diversification of secondary industry interests. These include wool and nylon factories, timber mills, milk processing plants, tyre production, ready-mixed concrete and light engineering plants. About 38 per cent of Wangaratta's workforce is employed in these secondary industries, a figure six per cent higher than the state average.

The city of Wangaratta has shown a small but steady population increase. In the five year period between 1971 and 1976 the population grew from 15,500 to 16,150. This represents an increase of 3.7 per cent (or an annual increase of about 0.75 per cent); 37.1 per cent of its population is under the age of 20 (compared to the state average of 36.1 per cent). Eleven per cent is over the age of 65, a figure 2.0 per cent higher than the state average of 9.0 per cent.

The study centre established by Deakin in Wangaratta in 1978 is located in the local Centre for Continuing Education (known locally as simply The Centre). There are approximately 60 Deakin off campus students enrolled from the wider Wangaratta area, making it one of the smaller of the Deakin study centres.

The centre is housed in an old high school building in the central area of Wangaratta. It began operation in 1961. Since that time it has offered a variety of formal and informal classes, seminars, meetings and discussion groups in the areas of adult and continuing education.

The centre consists of a 70 year-old, two storey brick building and a number of portable classrooms owned by the Education Department. The department also provides furniture, stores some equipment, and occasionally offers subsidies for equipment and the repair and maintenance of the building. It also provides a full-time executive officer seconded from the secondary division and a full-time administrative officer seconded from the primary division of the Education Department.

Apart from this provision of the physical facilities and senior staff, the department has handed over policy making responsibility to a committee of management.

The Centre is in a central location in the town, just off the main road. The main building includes about six large rooms (used for meetings and classes), a large lecture theatre/gallery and a number of smaller rooms, as well as a central office, kitchen and common room area.

Most of the rooms are used for continuing adult education activities. They are also used for community group meetings and classes arranged by groups other than the centre's committee. The local primary and high schools also use the facilities.

Deakin's off campus students have one upstairs room for meetings and tutorials and a smaller adjacent room that houses course handbooks, video tapes and a video tape recorder. The larger room is mainly used for Deakin tutorials and meetings between 5-7 p.m. weekdays (with occasional weekend classes). Apart from these times, it is used by other centre classes.

Within the room allocated to Deakin students, copies of all study materials for Deakin's off campus courses are available for student reference, study guides, handbooks, required course readers, audio cassettes and video cassettes Deakin has supplied the centre with a video cassette recorder and a T.V. monitor. However, with the exception of video cassettes and equipment, these materials are supplied directly to students and would generally therefore only be used when students wish to examine materials of courses they are considering for future enrolment. There is little other suitable reference material in the centre.

Library facilities are limited. Deakin has made an arrangement with the Wangaratta Public Library (only several hundred metres walk from The Centre), which holds a selection of reference material for Deakin courses. These books are incorporated into the library's general reference material and are available also for loan to the public. A separate catalogue of Deakin books is kept. Use of these materials is quite limited.

The university provides direct postal delivery of all necessary study materials to students. While the study centre plays no part in this process, the executive officer of this centre (as with many other Deakin centres) finds that a large proportion of the calls he receives from students concern delays in delivery of materials or in the return of assignments.

At the Wangaratta Study Centre relatively few tutorials are conducted. In 1980 three Deakin subjects were holding fairly regular tutorial meetings fortnightly, provided by two tutors. Approximately 60 tutorials a year are held in the centre. Attendance is regarded by the executive officer as poor. There appear to be no organised self-help/study groups using the centre's facilities this year, and as far as the co-ordinator is aware, no such groups have been formed in the area.

Thirty three of the 64 off campus students live within 20 kilometres of the study centre. 18 of the remaining 31 reside within the 20 to 40 kilometre zone, while nine live between 40 and 60 kilometres. Only four reside further than 60 kilometres from the city.

TABLE TEN

Showing the distance students live from the study centre.

Kms. from Centre	No. of students	% of student population
0 - 20	38	52
21 - 40	18	28
41 - 60	9	14
61 - 80	1	1.5
81 - 100	2	3
over 100	1	1.5
Totals	64	100

The study centre in Wangaratta invites students to contact the executive officer of The Centre for counselling, information and advise. The executive officer may be of some help in giving very general course information or general study advice. However, he has little contact with Deakin and therefore specific queries must necessarily be re-directed to appropriate staff at the main campus.

The Centre has not organised any orientation programs for local off campus students, and Deakin has not initiated such meetings.

The Centre is advised by Deakin of students who will be sitting for examinations at the end of the year and is responsible for the organisation, supervision and provision of facilities for local students to sit for these.

The executive officer also has responsibility for all of the other continuing education programs provided by The Centre. The Deakin program is only a very small part of those activities. (In the total 1979 program of The Centre, there were a total of 271 classes, seminars or workshops offered; 2,781 class sessions, meetings or workshops; 35 screenings, recitals, exhibitions or displays; and eight public lectures).

MILDURA STUDY CENTRE

Deakin's Mildura study centre began operation in 1978. The facilities are housed within the Mildura Education Centre which, through the Education Centre of Sunraysia (ECOS), provides a teachers' resource and in-service education service as well as adult education classes. The Mildura Education Centre has been running for approximately five and a half years. Its principal role is to facilitate continuing education. The community of Mildura is described in the VTOCN study centre profile.

The Mildura Study Centre had only 24 Deakin off campus students enrolled in early 1980. However, several had terminated their studies at the time of this report. This number makes Mildura Centre by far the smallest in the Deakin network.

The majority of students (18) were studying a range of education subjects, while the others were studying subjects in humanities and social sciences. Six were studying journalism with smaller numbers in other courses.

The centre is located in an old house on the grounds of the Mildura High School, approximately three quarters of a mile from the main town centre of Mildura. The building, which is set back about 100 yards from the road (separate from the high school buildings), was used as a girls' hostel prior to its use as the Mildura Education Centre.

The building has about five main teaching/activity rooms as well as a main office, a conference room, the ECOS Teachers Centre and a large kitchen with refreshment facilities. There are also a number of enclosed verandahs and a store room.

All of the facilities in the centre are available to Deakin students, although there are no tutorials being conducted this year. Deakin University students seem to use the centre to contact the executive officer when they have study difficulties.

There is also some use of the library in the ECOS centre for secondary reference material relevant to Deakin courses. Use also is made of video taped course material and a VTR housed in a small discussion room attached to the centre. Students may obtain a key to this room in order to use it outside of normal hours.

Local library facilities are mainly provided by a range of reference books in the public library (Carnegie Library) placed there by Deakin University. This collection numbers several hundred books, which are also available for loan to the public. The library is some distance from the study centre.

Early in the year the centre receives computer lists of enrolled students. The list includes their courses and subject tutors. Any arrangements for local tutorials are made between local tutors and the executive officer. Later in the year, the centre is advised of students sitting for subject examinations. The centre is then responsible for organising and supervising the examinations.

Although there are no Deakin tutorials at the moment, the facilities for tutorial groups are quite extensive and certainly adequate for the number of Deakin students at the present time. There is one main disadvantage; the centre is a rather old secluded building which has been only superficially re-decorated and its relative isolation may deter students from using it at night.

The centre, therefore, principally provides an opportunity for contact with the executive officer, course material for student reference, and some secondary study material at the local Carnegie Library.

The executive officer has very little contact with Deakin university. His ability therefore to provide general course counselling, information and advice is limited. Specific study problems generally have to be directed to course advisors or tutors at Deakin. The problems of distance are important in Mildura due to the delays involved in postal contact or the expense of telephone contact.

The executive officer is aware of only about three or four Deakin students who are using the centre this year.

It would seem that contact between Deakin University and the Mildura Study Centre is very limited indeed, and consists principally of the regular delivery of parcels of course materials and video tapes. In face, the executive officer was unaware that advertisements for courses and tutors were being placed in the local papers by Deakin University.

Of the 24 off campus students, 17 (72 per cent) live within 20 kilometres of the centre.

TABLE ELEVEN

Showing distance students live from the Study Centre.

Kms. from centre	No. of students	% of total student populatio
0 - 20	17	71
21 - 40	0	1
41 - 60	2	8
61 - 80	1	4
81 - 100	2	8
over 100	2	8
Totals	24	100

ALBURY/WODONGA STUDY CENTRE

The Deakin study centre in Albury/Wodonga is situated in the Albury campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education. Deakin off campus students are, by arrangement, entitled to use all the facilities of the campus. Campus clerical staff report that Deakin students use audio-visual equipment, library facilities and rooms for tutorials and examinations but only to a minimal extent. Only about six students use the video equipment each semester; the audio cassette players have not been utilised. There are no student self-help group meetings and only one tutorial group has been meeting regularly in any one semester. The centre has very little contact with Deakin students. It is believed that students normally telephone their enquiries through to the main campus.

The campus is open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Fridays and during term vacations. The campus is normally not open during the weekend, but at the present time Deakin University holds a tutorial for its off campus students on Saturday mornings. Commercial security officers open and close the building on these mornings. Pilot studies of Riverina students have revealed no consistent student demands for regular weekend openings.

Deakin books are shelved in a special part of the campus library, separate from the main collection. Materials supplied by Deakin, either books or catalogue microfiche, are rarely consulted. Deakin students have borrowing rights for all library books but these privileges are seldom exercised. However, in recent times there have been some signs of increased Deakin student activity in the library.

The co-ordinator believes that students in the region choose Deakin off campus courses because

- family commitments restrict attendance at classes;
- students live outside an acceptable commuting distance from the campus (about 45 kilometres); and most importantly
- students may prefer a university degree to a C.A.E. qualification.

However, there is no evidence to either confirm or deny these hypotheses.

According to the co-ordinator, Deakin students exhibit a 'commercial' orientation in their studies. That is, the students are after a degree and desire the simplest path to its achievement, without additional activities such as social functions.

The geographic distribution of Deakin students at the study centre is shown below.

Of the 55 students, 17 reside within 20 kilometres of the centre while another 17 live outside the 100 kilometre zone, with 21 students residing between 20-100 kilometres from the centre.

TABLE TWELVE

Showing the distance students live from the Study Centre.

Kms. from centre	No. of students	% of total student population
0 - 20	17	30
21 - 40	3	5
41 - 60	7	13
61 - 80	9	18
81 - 100	2	4
over 100	17	30
Totals	55	100

BENDIGO STUDY CENTRE

Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong are the three largest provincial cities in Victoria. Initially they were 'competitors' for the fourth Victorian university. Later they were named by the state government as the three cities to share a multi-campus regional university. Events subsequently moved in a different direction and the university was established in Geelong. In both Bendigo and Ballarat, the teacher training institutions were merged with the more broadly-based institutes of technology. Those years were fraught with some anxiety as these institutions contemplated an uncertain future. Perhaps the Bendigo College of Advanced Education is still regarded as facing substantial difficulties.

Staff at the Bendigo College generally feel that the coming of Deakin has had an adverse effect on college enrolments. There is some measure of truth in this belief, though perhaps not as much as the college believes. It is true that the college had a small operation in Shepparton, to which lecturers were sent weekly, rather like Riverina and its Albury/Wodonga campus. Deakin's off campus program apparently rendered this operation uneconomic and it was discontinued. However, Bendigo still has an off campus program offering courses with which Deakin's program competes. The off campus program at Bendigo is still active. It is against this background that Deakin negotiated with Bendigo College to provide study centre facilities. These negotiations were protracted and resulted in an agreement couched in the following terms:

- In return for providing study centre facilities for Deakin students, Deakin will reimburse the College $30 per enrolled student, with a minimum payment for 40 students to cover general administration expenses.
- Tutorial payments will be at the hourly rate as set by the Victorian Institute of Colleges, currently $20.83. Variations in that rate will be based on groups of eight students or part thereof.
- A marking fee as determined by the schools according to their educational needs will be paid as appropriate.

- The marking fee and tutorial payment will be negotiated separately with tutors but the total amount will be paid directly to the college.
- When advertisements are placed for regional tutors each of the deans will write to Bendigo advising them of the courses for which tutors will be needed. The college will then have opportunity to put forward the names of members of staff who are suitable and interested. Should circumstances arise where a staff member is permitted to offer his services independently of the college, Deakin will advise Bendigo if it wishes to employ him.
- Finally, with respect to examinations, Deakin's examinations officer makes arrangements with other institutions to conduct examinations for students who cannot attend the campus. The institution providing the service makes the appropriate charges as agreed at the time the arrangements are made. In some instances no charge is made where reciprocal arrangements are made. Payments for this service are made to the college.

Clearly there was difficulty in the college accepting the fact that it would serve as an agent for an institution it believed was threatening its own viability. In view of that anxiety one can only remark that the arrangement has worked better than might have been expected.

There were difficulties in the past. Deakin provided text and reference books, study guides and readers, and audio and video materials for the Bendigo College Library. These were not integrated into the college collection and it soon became difficult to make them available to students. There was, in any case, little call for them by students. Deakin staff felt Bendigo was not acting in a facilitative way for Deakin students in the area. No doubt Bendigo staff would have had some criticisms of Deakin's operation.

Since those days regular tutorials have been organised. They are run by tutors on the staff of the college. A new chief librarian has been appointed and has integrated Deakin material into the college collection. More recently, the director of the college has appointed a co-ordinator who will be a focal point for communication and liaison with Deakin. There is less evidence of the earlier feelings of antagonism toward Deakin, although no doubt some residual feeling still exists.

Discussions with tutors, the Chief Librarian and students all suggest that Deakin students make minimal use of the study centre. The tutors report that only about 50 per cent of students in their groups attend tutorials, although those that do attend are fairly regular. This in itself suggests that there are two classes of external students, the attenders and the non-attenders. Some of their students arrange private viewing of video materials, although considerable viewing is done within the tutorials themselves. Students also contacted tutors at times seeking information, advice or help with the course. The tutors believed Deakin would do better to make tutorial attendance compulsory.

The chief librarian had no formal record of library usage by Deakin students. The impression she received from her staff was that there was little borrowing although some browsing occurred. In the absence of records, however, the extent of usage cannot be assessed. It seems likely to be minimal. (As a further illustration of the difficulties in assessing usage, it should be noted that where Deakin students in the Bendigo area have a spouse who is a staff member of the college, much of the borrowing for the student is done by the spouse).

The library had had no demand for video viewing.

Few enquiries come to the college from Deakin students, which seems to confirm this picture of limited use. Indeed, discussion with the students confirmed this. If tutorials or meetings were arranged at the college they would consider attending, but apart from this most felt no need to do so. There was some suggestion that they felt a little like interlopers rather than as having rights and privileges on campus. While none of the students themselves had experienced any unpleasantness, they had been told by students in earlier years of embarrassment experienced by students.

From the table that follows and the accompanying figure, it will be seen that Bendigo students are rather widely distributed, with less than half residing in the city or its immediate environs.

TABLE THIRTEEN

Showing the distance students live from the study centre.

Kms. from centre	No. of students	% of total student population
0 - 20	47	44
21 - 40	6	5
41 - 60	19	18
61 - 80	8	7.5
81 - 100	8	7.5
over 100	18	18
Totals	105	100

COMMENT ON DEAKIN STUDY CENTRES

Deakin study centres were established with certain aims and objectives clearly in mind. In summary, these were to provide in provincial population centres

- a university presence;
- accommodation for occasional tutorials and lectures;
- facilities for storing, using and lending equipment;

- a meeting place for students; and
- a reference centre (for information and advice).

It is clear that, apart from the Melbourne Study Centre, Deakin students make only limited use of study centres. Taking the objectives one by one, several comments can be made.

Clearly the study centres have not in any sense provided a university presence in any of the communities. No Deakin 'sign' exists outside any of the study centres. Rarely is an area or office within a centre specifically designated as Deakin territory. In the continuing education centres there are notice boards and some displays of Deakin information, but this is quite limited. In the colleges even this is absent. Deakin University is not listed in local telephone or other service directories.

Some potential students make preliminary enquiries at the study centres but such enquiries are limited. It is fair to suggest that the majority of residents in any of the cities in which Deakin has a study centre are largely unaware that the university is so represented.

Centres do meet the objective of providing accommodation for tutorials and lectures. In no case, apart from the Melbourne study centre, are difficulties experienced in providing sufficient accommodation for these purposes. Occasionally there are timetabling problems and there have been one or two specific access problems, but apart from these the system works well. This is partly due to the relatively small number of tutorials held in country Victoria. The overall numbers of students in any district, spread over a range of subjects, means that in most centres excluding Melbourne three or four tutorials a week would be the maximum. Attendance at these tutorials seems to be about 50 per cent at best.

The question of attendance is an interesting one and deserves further explomation. There is some suggestion that students, at Wangaratta for instance, will not travel regularly to a tutorial in Shepparton (and vice versa) unless two or three can share the travelling. This seems more related to the effort required rather than to the cost, although the importance of the latter will no doubt increase. Another important factor is the tutor appointed. From discussions it seems that if the tutor is visiting from Deakin and is scheduled to provide a formal presentation, attendance could be reasonably good. If it is a local tutor then that tutor must be regarded by students as an 'expert' and not just someone who happens to have done that course a year or two earlier. However the feelings expressed may have represented personal attitudes rather than a general attitude.

Even more importantly tutors are not always well informed by Deakin, and may see little tangible reward in extending their knowledge of Deakin. They often tend to identify with their students rather than see themselves as representing the university. In summary, it would appear that whilst accommodation for tutorials is assured by study centres, the effectiveness of tutorials in general still leaves much to be desired.

In relation to the third objective, study centres are reasonably well equipped to service students. Demand from students is limited largely to video viewing and, in some instances where the facility is available, photo copying. There is thus no call to borrow equipment. Indeed, many students have access in their work places to all the equipment they need.

From the inception of its distance education system Deakin recognised that student numbers in more remote areas would not allow tutorials to be held. It also recognised that contact with the university might not be easy. Self-help groups amongst students were therefore encouraged. These, it was thought, could meet at study centres as perhaps a reasonably central location. However indications are that this does not occur. Where such groups are established, they meet in students' homes. There is no evidence to suggest that students view study centres as a local 'campus' to which they belong.

Finally, it is clear that study centres do not serve as information centres. There is the obvious access to the host institution's library and related resources. Regional libraries in other centres provide this service. Library usage, however, seems quite limited. It is likely that Deakin's library provides a more effective service. It uses a 24-hour, door-to-door delivery service. The university pays the charges both ways. However, staff at Deakin's library believe that off campus students make far less use of the library than they would hope. No doubt this is related to the relative 'completeness' of Deakin learning materials at least at the first and second levels.

Other information about Deakin is provided only to a limited extent in study centres. If printed materials are provided they will be displayed. However, enquiries from established students that require accurate and up-to-date information about Deakin are rarely answerable by study centre staff. They rarely feel confident that they have the necessary knowledge; Deakin provides far too little information for them, and there is no substantial incentive for these staff, who are busy with their other commitments, to invest the effort that would be required to make them competent to deal with enquiries.

Few such enquiries are directed to the colleges, which provide study centre facilities, presumably because, with the exception of tutors, there is no obvious person to whom to address them.

A history of one or two unsuccessful enquiries probably persuades students that contact with Deakin itself is necessary to get the information they need.

Much of what has been said has been specifically excepted in the case of the Melbourne Study Centre. This centre is atypical in that it services a large number of students and is managed by a full-time Deakin staff member whose ability to deal with student problems increases as her knowledge of Deakin expands. In general, however, the overall impression is that Deakin study centres are not achieving the objectives set for them and are providing students at a distance with only the most limited services.

DISCUSSION

This study has examined the study centre systems of four institutions engaged in distance education. An attempt has been made to:

- understand the institutional context within which each of the distance education systems works;
- explore the nature of the distance education system provided by those institutions;
- identify the philosophy and practice relating to each of the study centre operations;
- examine individual study centres in each of the systems to determine what they provide and what use students make of them; and
- to set these study centres in the context of their local communities.

The discussion that follows covers a number of broad questions.

- Why do some institutions engaged in distance education develop study centre systems?
- What is a study centre in terms of facilities, functions and staff?
- How do students use study centres and what factors determine whether they use them?
- Is there a special problem with libraries in study centres?
- How much do study centres cost?
- What criteria are available to judge whether a study centre is successful or not?
- Is it possible to describe an 'ideal' study centre?
- Is it possible to see one or more networks of study centres developing that cross institutional boundaries and provide 'national' coverage?

1. Why do distance education systems develop study centres?

The introductory review of support systems, whilst not representing an exhaustive treatment, shows that there is an increasing concern with providing adequate support services for off campus students. Not only is this true of systems which provide learning materials of modest quality: it is also true of systems which are acknowledged as providing self-instructional learning materials of the highest quality. In other words the quality of learning materials does not appear to obviate a perceived need to provide support services for students. The objectives of such services may vary but seem to include

- enhancing the learning experience;
- providing access to educational facilities without which the learning cannot take place (libraries, laboratories and the like);
- integrating off campus students into the university (or college) community so that they become more than 'passers of examinations';
- facilitating interaction between staff and students and among students themselves so that, through dialogue, the learning experience is more than the simple absorption of knowledge; and
- motivating the student to remain 'on course' rather than discontinuing.

No doubt that list can be extended.

The review shows that different distance education systems emphasise different kinds of support services. Compulsory vacation schools; individual counselling/mentoring; telephone tutorial networks and networks of study centres are just some of the options. The paradox inherent in distance education has also been noted - that although distance education promises the off campus student the opportunity to pursue a course by means of independent study and although the learner can acquire (in most cases) all that is necessary from materials provided by the institution there is still a strong compulsion to provide face-to-face interactive supports in the ways suggested.

There appear to be several reasons for this.

In the first place, despite the avowal that distance learning is a valid alternative mode of education providing not only equal opportunity but an educational experience of equal quality, there is ambivalence on the part of those providing for the learner at a distance. An ambivalence reflected in the feeling that while on the one hand the learner can enjoy a minimally acceptable learning experience through self instructional materials, on the other hand there are deficiencies in such an education that can only be remedied by face-to-face contact or its nearest equivalent.

Secondly, there is a concern about equality of educational opportunity. In many institutions that teach off campus students it is possible or even mandatory that on campus students have access to all the materials that are distributed to off campus students. The result of this is that the on campus student has, in addition to the materials his off campus counterpart receives, all the facilities of the campus at his disposal including library, lectures, tutorial, staff consultants and interaction with his fellow students. To equalise the educational opportunities of the off campus student attempts are made to provide him with more face-to-face contact.

Thirdly, there is a concern for equivalence of standards. This is achieved in part by having the same assessment procedures. But there is real concern expressed in some quarters that if staff do not actually see students then the work submitted by a student may not actually be his. At best the reassurance provided by face-to-face contact in this respect is illusory but it nonetheless stimulates a desire for such contact.

Finally, it might even be suggested that the security and satisfaction of the lecturer depend in some measure on being able to get feed back from students. The face-to-face contact is to reassure the lecturer that he or she is valued by students.

Whatever the reasons there are strong compulsions to develop support systems that facilitate staff-student interaction in face-to-face situations.

The more specific question is why distance education systems select study centres as a major support mechanism rather than any of the alternatives mentioned.

Basically there seem to be three options. One is the weekend or vacation school, often compulsory, in which the student travels to the campus for periods of concentrated activity. A second is the study centre which requires either local staff appointments or staff to travel from the main campus or a combination of both. The third option is to use technology to allow the lecturer, remaining on campus, to interact with the student who also remains in his own locale. An example is the telephone tutorial and to a lesser extent video and audio programs distributed either by direct broadcast or cassette. While the advantages and disadvantages of each could be analysed it is intended here to examine only the factors that lead to the study centre option being selected (noting of course that the options are not exclusive and are often combined).

In addition to the more general factors noted previously that encourage face-to-face support, study centres are developed for several reasons.

- they provide the university or college with a local presence and as well as serving enrolled students may actually help to attract new students;
- they avoid loading students with the potentially high cost of travel in both money and time required by attending vacation or weekend schools.
- they are easier to manage than are the logistics involved in complex schedules of vacation schools; and
- the belief that a 'good' study centre provides the best

substitute for the student who is remote from
the facilities of the main campus.

No doubt the motives are more complex than suggested above but an examination of the statements made within institutions that use study centres tends to support this picture.

2. What is a Study Centre?

This is not such an easy question to answer. In attempting to do so the question is considered under a number of headings:

- definition
- types of centre
- facilities
- functions, and
- staffing.

Definition:

In an earlier section of the report a definition of study centres was offered. That definition emerged as the study progressed. In thinking about its appropriateness some modification seems necessary. As a working definition then the following formulation is offered.

A study centre is a physical facility, appropriately staffed, provided by an institution

- normally at a location remote from its main campus;
- often using the facilities and staff of another institution or organisation;
- providing students in the locality of the study centre with access to facilities and services required for their courses; and
- with only limited responsibility for those students.

Such a definition can be applied to the study centres examined in the present study with somewhat interesting results.

Firstly, the Victorian TAFE Off Campus Network. It is suggested that the colleges that make up the network cannot usefully be regarded as study centres. Initially when the network was established this was less clear. Perhaps because in its first year or so of operation all the students in the network were still enrolled as RMIT students. It was therefore logical to view other colleges as study centres which serviced RMIT students. However, that situation changed rapidly. The students are now enrolled students of the local college which takes full academic and administrative responsibility for them. That responsibility for students is normally discharged by providing all the necessary services for them at the local campus and by allowing them access to any facilities they may need. The courses offered lead, for the most part, to an award of the local college. Thus the study centre or the off campus centre as it is referred to in the network is really the administrative arm of the college that manages its off campus operation.

It does not seem sensible to designate a college as a study centre for its own students if by doing so it implies the provision of services and facilities that would otherwise be unavailable. Rather it is more useful to consider the network as a consortium of colleges which in relation to off campus studies, has certain centralised functions:

- development and production of course materials;
- budgetary allocations;
- provision of network tutors; and
- policy recommendations.

Not that this came about because the colleges, by agreement, centralised these activities but rather because a central agency, in proposing a decentralised system, determined that these should be centralised functions. However, now that the network is operating it is probably best understood as a consortium of colleges with a central body which could be independent of any one college, but would act on behalf of all member colleges in agreed areas.

This is not to diminish in any way the value of the initiative RMIT took in developing the network in the first place. It is a particularly valuable model of institutional co-operation in distance education. Nor does it suggest that such a network does not need a strong central co-ordinating authority. Without a strong co-ordinating authority the network would be in danger of fragmenting.

There seems little doubt that the network will continue to evolve and that despite its problems it will remain a sound approach to collaboration in distance education.

However, its relevance to this study should be seen in that light rather than using its constituent colleges as examples of study centres.

Secondly, a similar question can be raised in relation to the Albury/ Wodonga campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education. Whilst it may be used by Riverina off campus students as a study centre it exists primarily to service on campus students. The extent of the facilities provided and the range of staff available are determined entirely by the needs of the on campus population. Indeed it is likely that if it were not for such students no Riverina centre would exist in Albury: certainly the number of off campus students in the area would be considerably more if the Albury campus did not provide for on campus students. However, if the Albury centre were to service only off campus students it is clear that it would have been a very different centre with much more limited facilities and staffing.

The problem then is one of degree. No other study centre compares with Riverina's Albury centre. Whether one considers the Toowoomba or Mackay centres of Queensland University which service some hundreds of off campus students or the Melbourne Study Centre of Deakin University which services well over a thousand students there is no doubt that no study centre designed to service only off campus students is likely to be as extensive as the Albury centre. The provision of staff and facilities such as those provided in Albury requires an on campus population to justify them.

Thirdly, some comment about the Deakin centres which are identified with Colleges of Advanced Education is appropriate. It is suggested that these may be better viewed as 'reciprocal access' arrangements rather than as study centres. There is nothing that visibly constitutes a Deakin study centre in any of the colleges. No staff member is in charge of the centre (although a member of the college staff may be nominated as the college liaison officer). Tutors themselves arrange tutorials and rooms. The College library extends to Deakin off campus students library privileges often no different from those it extends to other members of the community. Audio visual requirements may be negotiated by Deakin students in the same way that any student of the college may do.

It is true that Deakin makes a per capita payment to the Colleges to cover any incidental costs incurred by the college in servicing Deakin students. It is also true that Deakin places in the college library books and audio visual material that the college library would not otherwise hold. Even so, the way in which the colleges service Deakin students is better regarded as a 'reciprocal access' arrangement. Indeed one of the colleges specifically recognises this and does not accept a per capita payment for students. It argues that it provides those services for students in its region enrolled at any tertiary institution. Likewise Deakin itself provides similar services to students living in the Geelong region who are enrolled at other tertiary institutions and does so without charge.

Again this is not to diminish the contribution that colleges make to Deakin off campus students nor to suggest that 'reciprocal access' is not an effective way in which to service off campus students: it is rather suggesting that it is an alternative expression of the study centre concept.

Whilst these points are being made about what constitutes a study centre and what does not, the discussion that follows will continue to make reference to all four systems where it seems helpful to do so.

Types of Centre:

Study centres are established in one of several ways.

Firstly, there is the purpose built centre, owned and maintained by an institution and designed to serve its own students. The prime example in the present study is the Toowoomba study centre of the University of Queensland. A similar centre belonging to the same university is at Mackay, although of more modest construction and servicing a wider body of students. Another variant is the leasehold centre which is nonetheless specifically designed and constructed as a study centre and exemplified by the Melbourne study centre of Deakin University. It should be noted that the purpose built type of centre is the least common.

Secondly, there is the centre provided by another institution or organisation in which it allows its facilities to be used by students of the distant institution. Examples are to be found in the Queensland University centre of Nambour in which a high school serves as the study centre and the Deakin centres at Bendigo and Wangaratta where the centres are provided respectively by a college of advanced education and a centre for continuing education. Two points of distinction might be noted. Financial arrangements are broadly of two types - in the first payment is made to the person who runs the centre (Queensland University) while in the second payment is made to the institution or organisation providing the facilities (Deakin University). A different issue is to be found in the 'mission' of the organisations that provide the facilities: in some that mission is complementary to that of the organisation for whom they are providing the service, while in others it is competitive. Examples of the former are high schools and centres for continuing education while an example of the latter is a college of advanced education which may offer not only parallel courses but have its own distance education program offering similar and equivalent programs.

Facilities:

Clearly there is a range of facilities commonly provided at a study centre. These include:

- Rooms for tutorials, meetings or interviews;
- Audio visual equipment;

- Teletutorial facilities;
- A library;
- Photocopying facilities;
- Reception and enquiry services; and
- Common room and refreshment facilities.

Centres vary in the extent to which they provide these facilities. The best equipped are the colleges which provide the full range of facilities for their own students and allow them to be used by students of the study centre. At all centres there is reasonable accommodation by way of meeting rooms although in a centre such as Deakin's Melbourne Study Centre usage peaks in the early evening and at weekends. During these periods accommodation is insufficient whilst between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays it is significantly under used. Some centres have small library collections and employ librarians, mostly part-time: in other cases the regional library collections are augmented. Most, but not all, have audio replay facilities and Deakin centres have video replay capacity. (The differences in providing audio visual equipment are dictated by the use of media in courses). Teletutorial facilities are fairly common but not extensively used by institutions and centres in this study. Similarly a student common room and tea or coffee making facilities are not unusual.

Beyond the facilities listed there is little else that students appear to need. The question of how these facilities are used and to what extent will be discussed later.

Functions:

What the study centre does is closely related to its facilities. There is no doubt that the four major functions of a centre used by students are:

- tutorials and other institution sponsored meetings;
- library;
- information and advice; and
- video replay.

As far as other facilities are concerned usage is more limited or incidental. Many students do make use of the common room and coffee-making facilities when they attend the centre. If the centre has a library then a student when using the library is quite likely to use a photo copier if one is available. Few students use a study centre for private study. Self-help groups tend not to use study centres. Increasing use is being made of teletutorials but these are institution sponsored meetings and best regarded as a variant of the formal tutorial.

It could be argued that study centres also serve as examination centres. Whilst this is true it is a use that has not been discussed in the present study. The use of a study centre for this purpose is more an institutional use rather than a student use. Examinations are compulsory and the student must sit them at the most convenient location provided. Examination centres in all systems are much more widely distributed than the study centres and this usage is better understood as part of the institution's examination system than of the study centre system.

Tutorials. Tutorials represent the single most important function of study centres in this study. In the case of Queensland centres tutorials are relatively frequent. A minimum of four students allows tutorials to be provided once a fortnight and ten or more allows them to be weekly. Moreover Queensland materials are designed on the basis that there will be regular tutorials in most subjects. In the case of Deakin materials it is not assumed that students will have access to tutorials. In some Deakin courses tutorials are as frequent as once a fortnight but more often they are much less frequent. Instead, Saturday workshops or week-end schools are used and may occur perhaps twice a semester. In all systems attendance at tutorials is variable. On average it seems that attendance ranges around 50 per cent. It also seems that in general, students who attend do so regularly whilst some students never attend.

Several factors influence attendance. In the Queensland system attendance is compulsory, unless specifically waived, for those living within a reasonable distance of the city. In the Deakin system attendance is not compulsory. Executive officers, tutors and many students in the Queensland system feel that it would be easier to manage the tutorial system if all students were required to attend regardless of distance from the centre. Some tutors in the Deakin system feel that tutorial attendance should be made compulsory. Clearly there is considerable dissatisfaction with attendance levels at tutorials.

An important factor in determining attendance is the tutor; students evaluate critically the ability of the tutor to help them in their courses. To be favourably regarded by students tutors need to demonstrate that they have substantial competence in the discipline and that they are familiar with the structure and requirements of the course. This may appear to be stating the obvious but students in a number of instances commented on the inadequacy of tutors in one or other or both of these respects. In addition the way a tutor conducts sessions appears highly relevant. The student who attends expects value for time spent. For many students this means being provided with information that will be useful in doing assignments or passing examinations. Accordingly most students respond more favourably to a structured, topic centred, tutor dominated tutorial than they do to a laissez-faire discussion with little tutor direction. Finally students expect tutors to take a personal interest in them, to be accessible and willing to provide some individual help. In particular students like a tutor to be able to give them feedback on 'how they are going' in the course. There are clear indications that some tutors acquire a highly regarded local reputation that influences the enrolment patterns of students. Some students enrol in one course rather than another because of the quality of the local tutor.

Other factors that have a bearing on attendance are such things as convenience of location, suitable seating and reasonable heating in winter. However, these factors seem marginal. A more significant factor appears to be the general atmosphere of the study centre influenced largely by the co-ordinator or other staff. If the attitude of staff is seen as positive and facilitative students tend to have a more positive attitude to activities at the study centre. The reverse also applies.

In summary it might be said that tutorials are supported best given a good tutor (as seen by students), regular weekly or fortnightly meetings, and when they are topic centred and tutor directed. Many students regard a 'mini' lecture as the best tutorial. Despite all these limitations, the tutorial, across the systems included in the present study, is the main function for which students use study centres.

Library. Library usage represents a second major function. However because the library is such a central feature in tertiary education it is afforded more extensive treatment in a later section devoted specifically to it.

Information and advisory services. Information and advisory services are the third main function for which students use centres. For example it was abundantly clear in the VTOCN system that by far the most important use students made of the centres was for information and advice. Naturally, in the case of that network, the co-ordinator is able to give advice. He or she is a 'teacher', employed in most cases full-time, by a college which is part of the network and the co-ordinator works on the college campus with easy access to his colleagues. This allows the co-ordinator to function effectively as an advisor. Contrast this with the Queensland situation where executive officers at study centres are part-time, have only limited knowledge of the university and are working at a distance from it. Indeed the contrast is more stark in the case of Deakin co-ordinators, who can have only limited knowledge of the university, who receive no remuneration for their personal activities in respect to Deakin, and who may have little contact with Deakin.

Clearly then there is a great deal of variation in the ability of a study centre to provide information and advice.

In looking at the kind of information and advice that may be sought from a centre some comments can be made. Among potential students the major enquiries to a study centre are for rather specific and detailed information about the institution, be it university or college, and about specific courses and programs within the institution. For many of these enquirers the information they are seeking is contained in university or college handbooks. Often, however, the kind of information sought is much less sharply focused. What are the opportunities on graduation from such a course or program? Are there choices to be made which could increase the marketability of the award? Should alternative courses or programs be considered - at that institution or another? Indeed the questions might be as broad as asking what is required for a student in tertiary education to be successful. The requirements of such enquirers are such that meeting their needs entails more than the provision of factual data: it moves into the areas of advising and counselling.

Until recent years this was not such a great problem. Those entering tertiary education were, in the main, school leavers. The range of choices was smaller. Information, albeit limited, was available in school libraries and teachers filled the role of advisors. Today however an increasing proportion of students entering tertiary education are mature age entrants. Often the step of returning to study is a much larger one and the issues they wish to explore in making the decision are more varied. When such intending students are going to become off campus students it is even more appropriate that they receive information and advice about the full range of opportunities available to them. Relatively few study centres have staff who have the background knowledge or the time to assist in this way. Those study centres with such resources report increasing calls upon them for this kind of service.

In the case of enrolled students the enquiries coming to study centres fall roughly into two categories. Administrative issues related to what is happening in the student's course - when and where examinations are to be held, what has happened to the next issue of course materials, why the last assignment has not yet been returned, what must be done about re-enrolment and the like. Most distance education programs provide some of this information in a standardised way but not always at the time the student wants to know. Student needs for information are generated by their own schedules, activities and anxieties. Being able to secure answers to such questions at the time they want them is regarded by both students and staff of study centres as important.

For other established students their needs are more academic. The opportunity to discuss with someone the meaning of a tutor's comments on an assignment. A better understanding of what the courses they are considering taking next year are really about. Whether or not as students they are getting out of the University or College experience all that they should. Such questions range from the very specific to the broadest possible.

Clearly if the informational needs of both intending and established students are of these kinds then a major role for a study centre is that of providing information in such a way that it merges into an advisory, counselling function. Again, few centres appear equipped to do this. Students who approach study centres once or twice and find no satisfaction cease making such approaches. Staff who find they do not possess the background to assist in this way automatically refer the student to the main campus. Indeed staff at the main campus would be unhappy if they thought such advising was being undertaken at centres. They would feel staff there are generally not properly equipped to give such advice and counsel. Yet staff at the main campus are often extremely difficult to contact. The loser appears to be the student. Perhaps one element in the alleged higher attrition rate of off campus students is the deficiency in the provision of information, advice and counselling. Nonetheless, it remains clear that a major call on study centres is for just such a facility.

Video replay. The needs for audio visual equipment in study centres are quite varied and depend very much on how much use courses make of such materials. In general a very high proportion of students possess or have access to audio equipment and rarely look to a study centre for this purpose. Where video is concerned far fewer students have such equipment but considerable numbers have access to it, for example at the schools in which they work. Study centres are used for video replay. However, the frequency with which video replay facilities (beyond those occasions when a tutorial group may use a video cassette) are used is considerably less than expected. The only one of the four institutions making extensive use of video is Deakin and it would appear that many of its students make little use of video material. At least only a small proportion of them do so at study centres. Nonetheless it still remains an important function of a study centre to supply such a facility for those students who wish to avail themselves of it.

Staffing

Staffing arrangements in study centres vary considerably although it is true to say that the variation is more between systems than between individual centres. Thus VTOCN centres, for the most part, have a full-time co-ordinator and some clerical assistance. Riverina College staffs its Albury/Wodonga campus to meet the needs of a considerable part-time on campus student population and its staffing is therefore quite atypical. Queensland employs part-time officers-in-charge and part-time librarians depending on the size of the population serviced by the study centre. Deakin depends on staff in the local institution or organisation to do whatever is required, but does not employ staff other than in its Melbourne Study Centre. Queensland and Deakin Universities and the VTOCN make considerable use of local part-time tutors.

These examples would suggest that the various types of staff employed may have quite different commitments to the study centre. In the VTOCN system it is clearly the co-ordinator's principal professional activity and as such he has a considerable personal investment in making the centre a success. This is not true of the officers-in-charge employed by Queensland University where their major professional commitment is to another job and another employer. Their standing within the community or advancement within their profession is probably only marginally affected by the success or otherwise of the study centre. However, there is personal commitment and a contractual responsibility to the university for certain tasks that clearly obligates these staff members. In the case of Deakin not only are the individual's loyalties primarily to his own organisation rather than to Deakin but he or she is not employed by Deakin and generally undertakes Deakin tasks as an 'extra' for which his organisation but not the staff member receives recompense.

These comments do not suggest that financial rewards are the critical factor in determining whether staff do their job well or not. A strong general impression of staff in study centres is of their commitment to serving students to the best of their ability. However such staff members have to determine for themselves their own sets of priorities and no doubt duty to their main employer must dictate the extent to which they can meet these supplementary calls on their time and energy.

These comments refer particularly to those who administer the study centres. There are of course tutors employed by the institutions who conduct tutorials at the centres. In both the VTOCN and Deakin systems tutors do not appear to identify strongly with the study centres although in the former it is the centre that negotiates their contracts. Their reference points are the students and/or the university or college that employs them. The study centre is little more than the provider of space. Whilst there is insufficient evidence to make too much of it there is some suggestion that in the Queensland system tutors might have a stronger identification with study centres. Tutorials in that system are more frequent: contact with the main campus is limited. Negotiations for their employment are effected by the officers-in-charge at the study centres. Without making too much of the point it does seem that they become a study centre staff resource in a way that is not true of the other systems. However even in that system it does not seem to be a staff resource that is fully exploited. There would seem considerable scope for integrating local tutors into the study centre to a greater degree than is currently the case.

In earlier sections of this report it has been made clear that a critical factor in the success of a study centre is the staff. Indeed this is regarded as the single most important factor. In some cases the question of how best to staff a study centre has received far less consideration than it warrants. For example, the appointment of an officer-in-charge or a co-ordinator may be determined more by protocol and the position the person holds than by selecting the best person available for the job. Clearly the restraints imposed by the inter-institutional arrangement limit freedom of choice in many cases. If however the nature of the staffing arrangements is vital to the success of a centre then it ought to become a primary rather than secondary consideration.

In this respect the Deakin system faces problems. If its students and potential students are to be effectively serviced by study centres a staff member needs to be provided who has:

- a clearly defined responsibility to the University and to students in the area served by the study centre.
- an accurate and relatively comprehensive knowledge of Deakin and its courses;
- the necessary personal capacities - initiative, organising ability, communication and interpersonal skills;
- time available to both create and do the job;
- a commitment to students that will allow the 'out of hours' demands of the job to be met; and
- a proprietary interest in creating a successful study centre.

The tangible rewards should be adequate and equitable in view of what is expected of such an individual.

The problem for Deakin is that in its College based study centres it has no provision for employing such a person nor could it expect a member of College staff to fill the role envisaged. In those study centres located at centres for continuing education whilst it is easier for the co-ordinators of those centres to meet some of these expectations it is unrealistic to expect them to meet all of them. If Deakin is to establish study centres that meet the full range of student needs it must resolve this staffing dilemma.

The situation is less difficult in the case of Queensland University which contractsdirectly with the staff it wishes to employ in study centres. In its purpose built centres it has complete freedom to choose the most appropriate person. In at least one case the success of the study centre reflects that selection in which the officer-in-charge embodies the equivalent requirement previously mentioned. The difficulty lies with Queensland's self imposed restriction of seeking the officer-in-charge first from a particular and small group of people - deputy principals of schools. Where a high school is designated as a study centre it may be difficult to do otherwise. However it may still be true that the use of school facilities with an officer-in-charge who is not the right person will produce a far less successful study centre than the converse. That is, the right co-ordinator will negotiate the facilities needed by students, and will generate effective use of them.

What has been said so far should not be taken as criticism of co-ordinators or officers-in-charge. The great majority of them are committed, competent and willing to help, but often lacking the time and appropriate resources to do so. What is more to the point is that institutions have failed to specify what they require, to provide resources so that the job can be done and to reward adequately people who do the job.

In concluding the discussion on what a study centre is, it is clear that whilst no single type of study centre is being advocated an understanding of the nature of study centres requires consideration of facilities, functions and staffing together with role definition and the identification of the appropriate organisational arrangements to provide such centres.

3. How do students use study centres, and what factors determine usage

Clearly the foregoing discussion on the nature of study centres has already covered much that is relevant to student usage. It is not proposed to repeat that discussion but rather to add some general points.

Firstly, in all systems the amount of use of study centres generally by off campus students is limited. A single exception might be the VTOCN system where considerable numbers of students seek information or advice from the off campus centre. Clearly however much of this contact is quite routine often by telephone and quickly dealt with. Queensland centres are used rather more for tutorials. Deakin study centres, Melbourne excepted, receive only minimal use. Overall the use made of study centres is much less than is considered desirable by the institutions that provide them.

Broadly speaking three types of factors seem to have a bearing on whether students use study centres.

- personal factors;
- factors related to the study centres themselves;
- factors related to the institution and its courses.

Personal factors. Under this heading can be included such things as educational background, learning skills and learning styles, dependency and other social and personal needs, reasons for undertaking courses, family and domestic circumstances, and domicile in relation to the centre. These factors are interactive. Some students remote from study centres attend tutorials regularly and some close at hand never attend. Experienced and capable students with quite independent learning styles use study centre facilities whilst less capable and more dependent students may not. A mix of factors determines usage.

Quite often it is said that the off campus student, because he is such a student, wishes to be entirely free of attendance requirements. This assertion does not have the general validity often assumed. For some students the choice of the off campus mode is dictated by circumstances such as distance or scheduling. Occasional attendance requirements may be welcomed by these students. For them the choice of this mode reflects a desire to avoid the rigid attendance demands of an on campus course but does not imply that they are unwilling to attend occasionally. Whilst some do not require social contact nor feel the need to participate in tutorials others value personal interaction. Discussion with off campus students indicated that the proportion of those preferring not to attend either campus or study centre for virtually any purpose would be at the most 20 to 25 per cent. The great bulk of students appreciate some contact provided it fits their timetables, is conveniently located, focused on their courses and may be used or not at their discretion. It is therefore not correct to assume that most students enrolled as off campus students neither need nor want contact with the campus (or study centre) or with staff or students. However their needs for such contacts are tempered in a significant way by other factors and those needs are often less salient than other considerations.

Factors related to Study Centres. These include the following:

i. Location. Most study centres are located near the centres of the cities or communities they serve. Some centres appear to be marginally disadvantaged by location but no more than that. Parking facilities and the availability of public transport are issues that affect only a few students. In general, it would seem that study centres are best located near other facilities (shops, banks, post offices) and in well lighted areas (as much of their use is at night). Beyond that there did not seem much evidence to suggest that location, amongst the centres studied, had any significant effect on usage.

ii. Accommodation. In no case did there seem to be an accommodation problem. Timetabling sometimes presented difficulties but only to a minor extent. The greatest call on accommodation was for tutorial purposes and library usage. Clearly a study centre can be set up with relatively few rooms to cater for quite a large student body.

iii. Furniture and Furnishings. These appeared to be less satisfactory. In some cases furniture was that provided for school children and no provision was made for comfortable seating in informal settings. Tea and coffee making facilities were generally but not always available. Heating, cooling, lighting and general decor appeared to have no bearing on whether students used the centre or not. The influence of furniture and furnishings seems again to be marginal.

iv. Equipment. Equipment was much more variable. It ranged from centres that provided almost nothing in the way of audio visual equipment, photocopiers or teletutorial facilities through to those that had all of these and more. The absence of such equipment in itself is not necessarily perceived as a deficiency. For example, if the study centre does not have a library then students generally expressed no need for access to a photocopier. Likewise if courses do not include audio visual learning materials students do not feel that the centre requires audio visual equipment. Generally the only feeling expressed about equipment was the observation that the more varied and complete the equipment of the study centre the more occasion there might be for students to use it.

v. Library. There was a strong feeling on the part of both students and staff associated with study centres that library facilities were extremely valuable. In centres where there is no library collection this was seen as a major deficiency: in centres where there was such a collection it was seen as a major reason for students to use the centre. This applied most clearly in Queensland and New South Wales but less so in Victoria. In Queensland it should be pointed out that the Thatcher Library and its staff received nothing but unqualified praise for the quality of the service provided. Libraries located in Queensland study centres were not seen as replacing the Thatcher Library but as providing students with a local opportunity to broaden their reading and to save mailing costs.

It can be concluded from the foregoing discussion that while physical aspects of the study centre should not be ignored they are not the most critical factors. There is little evidence to suggest that in general they either keep students away or encourage their attendance. The exception, of course, is library materials.

Factors relating to the institution and its courses. The kind of factors under discussion here are fairly much a matter of stating the obvious. Courses vary in the extent to which they use audio visual requirements. Where a course makes use of only the print medium students will have no need to use audio visual equipment at a study centre. Indeed it is only where a course uses video materials that students need the study centre as most have their own audio replay facilities. But even if video material is used in a course whether students view it will depend on the function of that material within the course. If it is enrichment only then students are more likely to exercise their right not to view it. If it is core material, examinable or even just highly relevant to central themes in the course it is more likely to be viewed

Courses differ too in the extent to which they require reading beyond the course materials provided and the prescribed texts which the student is expected to purchase. Deakin courses tend to be more self contained in this respect: Queensland courses require more library use. No doubt these distinctions will be less noticeable among the higher level courses. But even this factor is confounded by the availability of highly regarded mail order services from the main campus libraries. In other cases the student has access to alternative library facilities. So that even with a highly valued study centre facility alternatives available to students reduce the use of this facility. What is clear however that it is not simply the availability of books at study centres that is the important factor - it is the availability of the librarian as a resource person who can provide advice and who can negotiate on behalf of the student when he needs materials not available at the study centre.

Similarly courses differ in the extent to which tutors will be seen as a valuable and essential component of a course and likely to contribute significantly to a student's performance in assignments or examinations. The Queensland system sees tutorials as a more necessary component than does the Deakin system. Within the Deakin system however some courses place more importance on tutorials than others.

Beyond individual course requirements there is also the matter of the institutions' philosophy of distance education and the kind of courses it produces as an expression of that philosophy. While all systems make it possible for the isolated student to complete many of their courses many systems do stress the need for and the value of attendance and contact. For those systems the 'normal' student is the one who attends for some purposes on some occasions: it is the exceptional student who manages without any attendance. In the Deakin system the reverse is the case: it is the student who does not attend who is regarded as the 'norm' and for whom courses are designed. How much difference this makes to attendance patterns cannot be quantified but students indicate that in a number of instances they enrolled at a particular institution because of its philosophy and practice in respect of attendance requirements. It might be added that despite differences in philosophy, practices tend to become more uniform over time.

The most general conclusion that can be drawn about study centre usage is that students use them when they are the most convenient alternative. If self-help groups meet they usually do so in the homes of one of the students: it is more comfortable and convenient, particularly for the student who hosts meetings. If students have video replay facilities at work and can borrow the cassettes they often prefer to do this. Many prefer to use the mail order library service rather than use the more limited collections available at study centres. Similarly if a tutor decided to hold tutorials in his or her home then students would cease to use the centre for this purpose. The point being made is that few, if any, facilities at study centres make it essential that students use them.

4. Is there a special problem with libraries in study centres?

In a recent paper Allen (1979) discussed the role of University and College libraries in distance education. The following extracts and quotations say something about the role of the library in higher education.

> It is the hallmark of tertiary education that it prepares students not only to think for themselves, but also to acquire the intellectual techniques and practical skills to discover and critically examine the facts on which their thinking must be based. The prime function of the college library is to ensure that the students learn how to find out.
>
> (Libraries in Colleges of Advanced Education, 1971: 3).
>
> It must be certain that learning does not cease upon qualification and that it must recognize the need for all students to obtain a liberal education, to enable them to cope with the changing needs of society. Such aims require but two essentials:
>
> (a) The student motivation towards the development of continuing self-learning and the application of the knowldge so gained; and

(b) The student's access to comprehensive library resources.

(Standards for Libraries and Technical Institutes, 1973: 2).

Allen goes on to say:

> This concern for the relationship between formal higher education, the development of the ability in the student to learn outside the formal framework, and to continue the process after graduation, and the assumption that libraries and library resources are necessarily involved in this process, is widespread. "Interest in reading cannot be separated from the development of a critical attitude as a compulsory and continuous stage in the improvement of intellectual skills that is so necessary in a world of qualitatively heterogeneous and quantitatively overwhelming sources" (Stoica, 1977).
>
> The logical consequences of a library-centred, or even library oriented, educational philosophy have rarely been completely faced or accepted by academic institutions or by many pedagogues. It is relatively easy to get acceptance of a statement such as "it is a basic tenet that without a library, no college can perform any of its functions" (Libraries in Colleges of Advanced Education, 1971), or that "The library should be developed as a vital part of the total educational programme of the Institute" (Standards for Libraries in Technical Institutes, 1973).
>
> However, in practice it often proves difficult to establish that an "essential of satisfactory library service is the close integration of the library with the administrative and educational policies and practices of the university" (Wilson and Tauber, 1956). Where such a relationship is established "the librarian should be in a position to know of all modifications in the curriculum, since they are likely to affect the library" (Wilson and Tauber, 1956).
>
> (Allen, 1979: 4-6).

Much of the relevance of these quotations is summarised in the advice given to Colleges of Advanced Education on the objectives of the college library.

1. The basic aim is to teach students to use the library system - any library system- efficiently.

2. To teach a technique of information searching that can be applied to any subject - the kinds of publications that exist for different information needs.
3. To teach the structure and use of the specialist literature and its relationship to the total information and communication network of a subject.
4. To give students sufficient practice in using the literature so that they can continue to use it as a research tool to keep up-to-date, or to solve day-to-day problems.

(Report on Advanced Education, 1972).

No doubt discussion with university and college librarians would reveal their support for many of these views on the role of the library in higher education.

The real question for the present study is how does the library fill this role in relation to students at a distance and in particular how does the study centre provide adequate library facilities. The following lengthy quotation from Allen may serve to show how one librarian view the problems and possibilities.

> Attention is being given by librarians to the needs and difficulties of external students. However, compared with the number of such students and the range of courses being offered externally, the human and material resources being devoted to the support of external programmes is minimal. Most activity has been, and is, concentrated upon the bread and butter issue of providing prescribed reading materials. The logistics of communication with distant students severely limits the extent to which the library can offer even basic reference service. A librarian may be able to substitute one reference for thst requested when the latter is unavailable, but except where the library staff have acquired considerable direct experience of the particular course, there will inevitably be numerous failures in this situation.
>
> Unless a comparably large collection of books and periodicals is dedicated to the use of external students, there is an unavoidable conflict between the interests of those students on campus and those in distant places. The Open University solved this problem by providing no library service to students at all; the availability of

> public and academic library facilities across Britain makes such a policy possible, though not necessarily supportable, whereas it would be an untenable attitude in Australia. Some institutions, notably the University of Queensland, have established special library collections for external students that have attained some considerable size. However, it would be generally true that external students do not have anything like the equivalent access to library resources that internal students enjoy.
>
> (Allen, 1979: 11).

Allen then raises the question as to whether, in view of the centrality of library resources in higher education,external courses can in fact be educationally equivalent.

> If it is indeed true that "A qualitative change occurs only when students try to find out for themselves, by perusing the literature ..." and "This is the only way to learn how to choose the best solution and how to develop critical skills and creative power" (Stoica, 1977), or even more that when "confronted by the eternity of knowledge, students acquire the sense of intellectual time and of the necessary continuity" (Stoica, 1977), how are these necessary opportunities to be brought within the practices of external study?
>
> (Allen, 1979: 12).

Allen concludes by pointing to directions for improvement.

> There is a growing movement among Australian librarians for the study of library services in external education. There are also some practical initiatives through co-operation with public library systems, the introduction of computer based catalogues, and the improvement of communications between students and libraries, that hold out some hope. Consideration must also be given to techniques for the extension of reader education programmes to external students through the use of special packages, video tape presentations, or the recruitment of public librarians to take classes or provide demonstrations.
>
> It is perhaps of even greater importance that the designers and administrators of external study programmes recognise the specific needs of students to acquire more than the crude factual content set out in the syllabus. Only by a rethink on the objectives of higher education and their expression in the external mode of study, and through the redesign not only of specific subject units but of entire courses and their educational and administrative framework, will it become possible to invent techniques and experiences that may offer full value to the external student. In such a basic exercise the co-operation of librarians should be sought from the outset.
>
> (Allen, 1979: 12-13)

A recently published survey of library services to external students (Store, 1979) provides a vast amount of statistical data which is too comprehensive and not sufficiently current for the purposes of the present study (the material relating to Deakin is for its first year of operations in distance education, 1978). However it is of interest to note that when respondents to the survey were invited to suggest ways of improving and enriching library services for off campus students they suggested the following:

- Provide annotated catalogues to students.
- Provide reader education in use of indexes.
- Use available technologies.
- Encourage municipal libraries to provide for external students.
- Set up a network of study centres.
- Establish reciprocal borrowing schemes and a network of services.
- Find better delivery systems.
- Give external students telephone access to the library.
- Lend audio visual equipment and encourage its use.
- Produce regular library newsletters.
- Encourage the use of the library during the vacation.
- Produce attractive and useful library guides.

It is of interest to note that one of the suggestions made above is the setting up of study centres. That study centres do not obviate the problem of providing library resources for students in distance education is shown by Chris Fegan-Will, Thatcher Librarian at the University of Queensland. She summarises the main problem of the library in respect of off campus students as:

- Difficulties in harmonising library reference and book selection with the objectives of the external student system and the teaching departments objectives.
- Enormously varied types of library references issued in student study guides underlining the need for annotated catalogues.

- Problems of access and particularly limitations on 'browsing'.
- Providing reader education at a distance when students have little opportunity to use normal tertiary libraries.
- Choice of reading material by external students including ordinary delays and even the question as to whether Ringrose collections are viable.

Against such a background it should be clear that what is provided by way of library resources in study centres is quite inadequate. Perhaps care should be taken to temper that judgment by two observations. The first, that despite shortcomings in library provision evidence indicates that off campus students perform roughly as well as their on campus counterparts. Secondly, that off campus students themselves do not specify library shortcomings as having a major impact on their studies. Perhaps a more important fact is that, even to approach the ideals implicit in some of the previous discussion,would be an enormously expensive operation. No doubt some improvement can be effected for more modest outlays.

The problems and deficiencies of study centre library facilities should be apparent. In the VTOCN they are simply the problems of the adequacy of the local TAFE College library to which the students belong. In the Riverina (Albury campus) and most Queensland centres they are the problems of 'micro' collections. In the Deakin system they are the problems of suitably augmenting other collections and negotiating appropriate access for students. The interesting point is that the better the library facility at a study centre the more critical are the students who use it. The reason is simple: where there is no or only a minimal collection students have no expectations of a satisfactory library service and make alternative arrangements. However when a collection is sufficient to generate student usage student expectations rise and criticism of shortcomings becomes more trenchant.

There is no doubt that the cost factors in housing a small collection at a study centre are considerable. The cost of space and shelving. The cost of a librarian's time in maintaining the collection and servicing students. The cost of moving books from the main campus to the centre and vice versa. Equally the problem of accessability is a major issue for the study centre. Using a part-time librarian must mean that the library can only be open for a limited period. No doubt this period meets the needs of most students but proves difficult for others. Staffing is again a critical issue with a basic requirement that the librarian be familiar with the institution's courses, facilities and requirements in order to be able to advise students adequately.

However there are advantages accruing if library facilities can be made available locally for students. These are:

(i) access to on-the-spot reader services and help from the librarian.

(ii) more immediate access to wanted material (if it is in the collection).

(iii) avoidance of mailing costs for either or both the institution and the individual.

(iv) ability to browse in other subject areas as well as more broadly in their own subject area.

(v) development of library skills albeit in a limited fashion.

(vi) more effective use of the librarian's time (students do their own reference work instead of writing to ask library staff to do it for them).

The major issue is how best to provide library facilities in the local community remote from the tertiary institution in which off campus students are enrolled. In addition to the possibilities of a study centre having its own collection, such as the Queensland University Ringrose collections, there are a number of possibilities.

- using a local tertiary institution's library, augmenting the collection, negotiating full access for its students, securing adequate training for those students in the use of the library and having one or more librarians on staff who relate specifically to the distant institution, or

- using an existing regional library which can be augmented with staff and stock and to which could be attached the other study centre facilities necessary, or
- combining with other distance education systems together with the city or shire authorities to provide a tertiary education centre which collectively services a sufficient number of students to allow a reasonable library collection with reasonable staffing to be built up, or
- to do the above but in conjunction with a local organisation or institution for example a centre for continuing education, teachers centre, high or technical school or the like.

The conclusion that is reached in this study is that providing adequate library facilities for tertiary off campus students requires a co-operative effort and that a single model may not be a satisfactory solution.

5. How much do study centres cost?

The simple answer is that in those systems included in the present study the question cannot be answered. Even Queensland University which was a purpose built study centre such as the one in Toowoomba servicing only its own off campus students does not have a clear picture of the cost of that centre. Costs are charged against a number of budgets. They have never, to the writer's knowledge, been brought together so that the university can see clearly what the Toowoomba study centre costs. How much more confused the picture is when more than one institution is involved and when hidden subsidies are provided by individuals who give time and host institutions who contribute to running costs. This is without taking into account 'capital' costs other than those involved in furniture and equipment.

At this stage it is possible to point only to the range of costs that should be identified on which further data is required.

The following represent the array of potential costs that might be charged against a study centre.

Salaries

- Co-ordinator
- Librarian
- Clerical and Typing
- Tutors

Buildings and Plant

- Rent
- Rates, taxes, insurance
- Light and power
- Cleaning
- Gardens and grounds

Furniture and Equipment

- Supply of furniture
  - office equipment
  - audio visual equipment
  - library equipment
  - photocopying equipment
  - teletutorial equipment
- Maintenance of equipment

Telephone

- Rental, calls, ansaphone service

Consumables

- Stationery and office supplies
- Refreshments

Mailing

- Mailings to main campus
- Mailing to students
- Mailings to tutors

Travel

- Travel and subsistence costs for study centre staff

Travel and subsistence costs for main campus staff when visiting study centres

Library

Cost of relocating stock and cost of additional stock required for study centre.

Not only do the actual costs incurred have to be identified but in developing a cost benefit analysis the cost of any alternative system should be clarified. In addition there is a further problem with cost analysis: all too often potential savings are proposed in one area which represent, not savings, but the transfer of charges from one 'purse' to another. For example the cost of a tutor visiting a country centre can be saved by requiring that the students he would tutor attend a 'school' at the main campus. The cost is transferred from the institution to the student.

6. What are the criteria for determining whether a study centre is successful?

In view of the varied nature of study centres established by institutions it is somewhat difficult to identify specific criteria by which a study centre can be judged successful or otherwise. However several groups of factors appear to be highly relevant.

Firstly, there are factors related to capacity or potential. Does the study centre possess the required accommodation, facilities and staff to serve the purposes for which students use study centres? Is it suitably located and more importantly is it open at those times when off campus students are most able to use it? Even more importantly does it receive the necessary support from its parent institution to allow it to perform effectively? Finally does the study centre, through its staff, have a clear definition of its role and a commitment to creating an effective centre? Clearly these are necessary rather than sufficient factors.

Secondly, there are factors related to actual usage. Do students use a study centre for the major functions that have been identified? How many students or what proportion of potential student users? How frequently and to what extent? If students do not make effective use of the study centre what are the reasons and are those reasons generally known to and understood by those establishing study centres?

Thirdly and closely related, are factors related to attitude. How do students feel about a study centre? Do they see themselves as needing a service which could be but is not being provided at a study centre? Alternatively do they see themselves as not requiring study centre facilities? Are their attitudes towards a study centre and its staff positive or negative? Similar questions about attitude may be asked about tutors and indeed about the attitude of the community to the study centre.

Fourthly, there are factors related to the objectives of the institution in setting up a study centre. Are those objectives being met?

Finally, there are factors related to cost. Does a study centre provide a service at a reasonable cost?

When these kinds of tests are applied to the study centres established by Queensland and Deakin Universities the results generally would appear to be disappointing. Of the Queensland centres studied only one could be regarded as successful. The Mackay Study Centre has the accommodation, facilities and staff to provide a significant service to students. It is well used by students, with a relatively high proportion of potential users making regular use of its facilities. Attitudes towards the centre are positive on the part of students, tutors and members of the community. The centre appears to be meeting the objectives of the University and is doing so economically.

This is not true of the other Queensland centres, Nambour, Toowoomba and Gladstone, and for quite varied reasons. Toowoomba in terms of accommodation and facilities has the potential to be an excellent study centre.

Nambour and Gladstone have inadequate facilities. Gladstone lacks access at times when students are most likely to use the centre. All three have difficulties with staffing. Evidence of student dissatisfaction is quite marked and at Toowoomba and Nambour this dissatisfaction is reinforced by tutors. Indeed at those two centres the officers-in-charge are conscious that the centres are not working effectively. Certainly usage at these three centres is far lower than would be expected. Because of this relatively low level of student usage it is unlikely that the centres can be regarded as cost effective even if cost levels are modest.

A similar judgment that Deakin's study centres are not meeting the objectives of the University and are failing to provide a valued service to students is inescapable, with the exception of the Melbourne centre. Most notable is the extremely limited use of centres by Deakin students. Beyond attendance at a limited number of tutorials and some use of video replay facilities and library materials, little use is made of centres. Costs are not great and are determined chiefly by the number of potential users rather than actual usage. However it is very likely that the per capita fees paid for study centre facilities could be more effectively used. One of the chief disabilities of the Deakin system as seen in this report is the lack of co-ordinators who, as Deakin staff, are responsible to the university for the success of the study centre.

Because of the substantial differences between the general view adopted in this report about what constitutes a study centre and centres in the Riverina and VTOCN systems the same judgment cannot be made of those centres. Riverina centres are designed primarily to service on campus students and off campus student usage is quite limited by design. In the case of the VTOCN centres they are essentially the units of the colleges that administer their off campus studies program. Other criteria need to be used to evaluate the VTOCN system and the secondary campus operation of Riverina at Albury.

7. What is an ideal study centre?

Whilst the discussion under this heading may seem prescriptive it is not intended to be read that way. There are no doubt many ways of organising student access to study facilities. However, it is equally clear that in general, institutions setting up study centres are not as successful as one would expect. The 'ideal' that is presented here should be understood then as one way of dealing with some of the major difficulties and deficiencies observed.

A Co-operative Undertaking. A tertiary study centre for off campus students outside capital cities should be a co-operative undertaking. The opportunities for co-operation are considerable. Firstly, there is co-operation between the institutions each having off campus students enrolled within any given community. In many communities there are students of perhaps a dozen univerisities and colleges offering off campus studies. When aggregated these students may well represent a sufficient student body to allow a co-operatively organised study centre to provide them with an effective service. Secondly, if there is a tertiary institution within the community a study centre can be set up in co-operation with it. Its accommodation and facilities, particularly its library, will provide a significantly better base on which to establish a study centre than almost any other organisation or institution. If there is not a tertiary institution in the community then consideration should be given to a co-operative venture between, for example, centres for continuing education, regional libraries, teachers centres, regional education offices, technical and high schools. In any community the organisation offering the best base for a study centre should be selected. Clearly the arrangement may differ from one community to another. Thirdly, there should be some co-operative arrangements involving the Shire or City authority. Various forms of support are available from such authorities and a tertiary centre in the community is likely to be more effective if it has the backing of the local authority.

Distinguishable and visible. A tertiary study centre should be a distinguishable and visible entity. Regardless of its location or with which other local organisation it may be associated it will function best if it is visible and identifiable as a study centre. Not that the study centre must necessarily have its own and separate building. In many instances a separate building is neither desirable or possible. When this is so one or more rooms could be set aside to form a study centre within the host organisation and identified as such. Access should as direct as possible. Signposting should be clear. A separate telephone with an appropriate entry in the local directory should be available. Even if it is part of a 'host' institution a study centre should be a physical entity. In most institutions it would be possible to make reasonable arrangements to do this if it were accepted as an essential condition for the establishment of a centre.

Staffing. A tertiary study centre should employ staff who are primarily responsible for the operation of the centre and for its success. Again, variety is possible. Firstly, a centre requires a co-ordinator. Ideally the co-ordinator should have a tertiary background, teaching and administrative skills, a counselling orientation and be employed for sufficient hours a week to develop an effective liaison with students and institutions. Secondly, library staff in any effective centre is a necessity. Not that this implies that every centre should have its own library. Library facilities should be either at the study centre or negotiated through the best library available locally. In some instances this will be the library of the local tertiary institution, or the regional library or even a high school library. Wherever the library is located it is essential to provide library staff who 'specialise' in meeting the needs of the students belonging to the study centre. It is not reasonable to expect librarians who have a primary responsibility to their own clientele to invest the time and effort required to service a specialised group of users studying with a variety of institutions. Thirdly, some secretarial support is also required. Many activities involved in running a study centre require time, common sense and practical skills such as typing rather than high level academic or administrative skills.

The ideal study centre will provide staff of these three kinds, full or part-time as appropriate, and in varying 'mixes'. Supplementary staff requirements such as audio visual support can be negotiated locally

Our ideal study centre will also make far more use of tutors than is generally the case at present. Tutors represent a potentially valuable staff resource that should be built into the study centre operation. As well as conducting tutorials, tutors could well be available for counselling and advising students. They may attend the centre not only to conduct tutorials but to supervise the centre for specified periods of time. At present their potential value in many systems is not recognised.

Financial support. The ideal study centre, being a co-operative arrangement, would be supported financially by the institutions involved. A total budget would be drawn up including rental, utilities, telephone and office expenses. Part of the overheads would be staff such as the co-ordinator, librarian or office secretary who would service all students. Tutors might provide some services as part of those overheads and some services particularly related to their own students: the latter could be directly paid for by the institution for which they were tutoring. The development of some equitable arrangement by which institutions contribute to the running expenses of such a centre should not be difficult. A lack' of proper funding arrangements at the present time dictates whether some functions are carried out or not.

There is however a further potential source of income. On campus students pay a general service fee which is used largely to support student organisations such as the S.R.C., sports association and union. Off campus students in some cases pay similar fees, perhaps at a reduced level and in other instances pay no fees. They make little or no use of facilities provided by the organisations mentioned above. There is some merit in off campus students paying, as a substitute for the general service fee which supports main campus activities, a 'study centre' service fee which is used to enhance the local facilities. It need not be a large fee: part of it may be remitted to the main campus in recognition of membership in the various student bodies but the bulk of it could be used to support the provision of study centre facilities. As well as providing a supplementary source of funding students would be more likely to use services in a centre which they are supporting financially.

Minimum accommodation. The study centre would need a specified minimum accommodation. A general office, library where necessary, one or two tutorial rooms, and a co-ordinator's office. In most study centres developed on a co-operative basis by several institutions one or two tutorial rooms would not be sufficient to meet the demand at peak hours. Rather than attempt to provide for such peak hour usage within the study centre the use of additional rooms could be negotiated. Clearly all that has been said previously about furniture, furnishings and equipment would apply. The extent of facilities necessary in the study centre would depend very much on the access to existing facilities negotiated by the study centre for its students.

Local functions. The study centre, should organise with the support of the respective institutions and the city or shire authority those public occasions that may mark the work of the centre and its students. For example a combined degree and diploma awarding ceremony might be organised in the city hall and presided over by one or more of the Chancellors, Vice Chancellors or College Directors. Commencement functions would be a possibility and student functions such as a dance or ball would not be out of the question.

Whilst a great deal more could be said about a study centre this probably suffices to demonstrate the main thrust of the argument. The essential ingredients are institutional co-operation, a physically identifiable centre, proper staffing, joint funding and community involvement.

Where institutions are currently providing a reasonable service to local students the cost of supporting such a study centre would be only marginally greater than their existing costs. Institutions not providing such service would have to make provision for the financial support necessary.

8. Finally, what of more extensive networks of study centres?

In a sense that question has already been answered. Every study centre outside the capital cities should be a co-operative venture between all the tertiary institutions servicing students in the local area. If institutions agreed to participate in such arrangements little more would be required. Clearly in some cases, one institution may be a major user (and major provider) and could therefore accept responsibility for taking the necessary initiatives.

Perhaps in each state one institution might accept a co-ordinating role with respect of study centre operations. It is more likely however that attempts to regulate or co-ordinate by any one institution being given such a role would be met by hostility and suspicion. More appropriate would be the encouraging of institutions which are developing such centres and which are amenable to co-operation to develop patterns of co-operation appropriate to local circumstances.

Whether some tangible form of assistance should be given by government is a matter for debate. It would be suggested in this paper that the most appropriate way of doing this would be some direct contribution towards the capital costs of supplying study centre accommodation in local communities whether this be obtained by alienating accommodation in an existing institution, augmenting the accommodation available in another organisation or institution or creating a purpose built centre.

Networks of study centres, to be successful, ought to be a natural outgrowth of co-operation between institutions in an attempt to meet the varied needs of students at a distance more effectively.

CONCLUSION

It is necessary to reiterate the point that the argument advanced in this report is not that all distance students require a local study centre nor indeed that providing such centres is the most effective way of supporting students at a distance. The review of support systems clearly indicated that there are alternative forms of support service. Study centres are only one option.

The conclusion reached in this report is that, on the whole, study centres where they do exist are not functioning as effectively as they should be. A number of factors contribute to this situation. In some instances the deficiency is one of understanding what centres can and cannot do effectively. In other cases it is a failure to provide the resources that will allow the centre to function well. Suggestions are offered about a number of factors - co-operation, funding, staffing, community involvement and the nature of the facilities to be provided - that would remedy these defects. Overall however the major emphasis must be seen as the focus on staffing. The quality of the staff employed in the local area determines the success, or otherwise of the local centre. It is further noted that institutions do not fully use the staffing resources available.

There is a role for study centres and providing institutions co-operate there can be a sufficient aggregation of users to make study centres cost effective. These co-operative arrangements need to be developed sensitively and gradually. Network arrangements could be an outcome of such co-operative ventures but one unlikely to be effective if imposed upon institutions.

Finally, it should be noted that this report is not the end of the study. In both Queensland and Deakin Universities further exploration of study centres and the students they serve is planned. Queensland University is examining the possibilities of more formalised co-operative arrangements between itself and other tertiary institutions in order to provide effective study centres. Deakin is planning to investigate more fully the needs of particular communities and how these could best be met by local study centres. If this report contributes to these and other initiatives in relation to student services in general and study centres in particular it will have served a modest but useful purpose.

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